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멸망한 세계의 유일한 생존자
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Two days passed by since the end of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

The nightmare-filled 'Isle of Reincarnators' could no longer be seen; Constellations were gradually leaving the Ark for their rightful spots in the night sky.

- This stop is for .

Constellations from stood up from their seats after the ship made the announcement. Dionysus, standing as their representative, shifted his gaze over to Jeong Hui-Won and addressed her. [My apologies for leaving first, even though this is a difficult period for you.]

"No, we'll be fine, thank you."

[Do not be overly worried, however. He's no ordinary Constellation, after all. Without a doubt, he's still alive.]

He lightly tapped her shoulder and soon, disappeared beyond the Dark Dimension while leading other Constellations. She stood there and silently waited until they were gone from her view before climbing down from the bow of the Ark. When she got to the bottom of the stairs, she found a person waiting for her – Han Su-Yeong.

"Dionysus?"

"He left."

"Both Cheok Jun-Gyeong and the , too?"

"I think they'll be leaving pretty soon."

"And Uriel?"

Han Su-Yeong continued to ask, and Jeong Hui-Won continued to answer. Most of what

they chatted about were trivial information, stuff like Hades and Persephone, Uriel, Cheok Jun-Gyeong's abode, etc. Some who would be leaving, some who would be staying, some who would accompany them… A part of the info was about the matters everyone knew already. The thing was, though, it was not really important whether someone knew this or that.

"Ha-Yeong-ee is still completely worn out and teacher-nims are helping her out by performing 'Chu-gung-gwa-hyeol'." (TL note at the end)

"And Ji-Hye?"

"At the back, fixing her battleship."

"What about Yi Hyeon-Seong?"

One would ask, while the other would answer. They walked on the corridors of the Ark and repeated this process. It was as if they wouldn't be able to hold back even for a second by not doing it.

"What about the kids?"

"Well, they…"

Before Jeong Hui-Won could finish her sentence, they heard the kids' voices coming out from one of the cabins lining up the corridor.

- I knew it. I gotta sign the contract with the darkness right now so I can get my revenge for hyung…

- Revenge? What revenge? Ahjussi is definitely alive. I can feel it.

-… Well, uh, I also knew that. If it's Dok-Ja hyung, he's definitely…!

- You need to wake up already. We need to come up with a sound plan right now.

Jeong Hui-Won's and Han Su-Yeong's steps came to a halt at the same time as if they had promised to do so. They listened to the kids' conversation. Those two were bawling uncontrollably only the day before. However, the two of them, as they appeared through the cabin's window, were…

“…I guess they will be fine, after all," said Jeong Hui-Won.

Han Su-Yeong waited for a beat before asking her. "What about you, then?"

The latter didn't reply. Instead, her gaze slowly faltered. The former stopped looking at her conversation partner, and shifted her own gaze lower, too.

Jeong Hui-Won opened her lips eventually. "He asked me to save him."

"…”

"He pleaded with me to rescue him."

She tightly clenched her fist. They didn't need to stare at each other to feel this emotion resonating between them.

It sounded as if dry rain was falling somewhere; Han Su-Yeong listened to that noise impassively, before speaking up. "We'll have a lot of things to do when we get back."

“…Right. I know." Jeong Hui-Won rubbed her face with her sleeves and smiled weakly.

"For the time being, we should go back to Seoul, right?"

"We should."

"There will definitely be some bastards aiming for Seoul now that Dok-Ja-ssi has disappeared. And we'll have to sort out the law and order back home, too."

"Who'll tell Yi Su-Gyeong, though?"

"That, well…”

The two women stopped talking and stared at the empty space for a

while. The first person to break the silence was Han Su-Yeong. "I wish we still had Yu Sang-Ah with us in times like these."

"…I miss Sang-Ah-ssi."

They had lost far too much getting here.

Their gazes shifted outside the window to see the passing view of the Dark Dimension.

They saw the stars on the faraway galaxies sparkle softly.

The universe wouldn't be destroyed just because a single star suddenly vanished.

There was a countless number of them, and their light would continue to exist afterward, too.

But for those living on a certain planet, that particular star would be everything they knew about the light itself.

Han Su-Yeong did her best not to look at Jeong Hui-Won's reflection on the window.

The latter muttered in the meantime. "Just what on earth has happened to Dok-Ja-ssi?"

The former didn't reply and began walking again. Not too long afterward, they arrived at the last cabin in the corridor. They quietly opened the door and entered to find Yu Jung-Hyeok wrapped from head to toe in bandages lying on a bed.

Han Su-Yeong spoke as she rummaged through her inner pockets to find a lemon candy. "… We should be able to find out once this idiot wakes up."

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This happened back when I was still in the middle of reading the 'Ways of Survival'.

I was scrolling down the chapter, fully satisfied knowing that I had completed the day's work, only to discover something written on the [Author's words] corner at the bottom.

- Dok-Ja-nim, what do you think?

I've already forgotten what that question related to. It might have been about the plot development, or he might be implying something about the novel itself. Now, how did I answer him back then?

- Mm. Well, such a simple twist is a bit…

- You thought so, too?

I was startled anew by this portion of my memories. Did something like this really happen? I remembered so well about the 'Ways of Survival' itself, so why have I completely forgotten about this part of the memories? I couldn't understand it at all.

Right, now that I looked back, the author did chat with me every once in a while, didn't he?

As for me, I wrote comments to engage the author; most of the time, it was to cheer him on, or to ask questions regarding the next regression turn, but sometimes, I did try to tackle him over the novel, too.

I think it was around when Yu Jung-Hyeok had just gone past the 600th turn.

I just couldn't understand something about the novel no matter how hard I thought about it, so I end up arguing with the author through the comment section.

- Author-nim. Was that a typo? How can Jung-Hyeok-ee smile

brightly?

'tls123' replied back.

- Anyone would change like that after regressing over 600 times.

I thought that the answer kind of made sense after hearing it. And that must've been the first time that I began thinking earnestly about the number of times Yu Jung-Hyeok had regressed.

Regressing over 600 times, was it. What did life even mean to a being that had to repeat such a life over and over again?

「Kim Dok Ja, wa ke up.」

Dull pain pulsed inside my head and my consciousness returned gradually. My body felt lethargic, and terrible pain buzzed from all corners of my Incarnation flesh. I barely managed to tear my eyes open, and the faint rays of light pierced into my eyes.

And then, a familiar voice came flying in my ear.

"Looks like he's finally woken up."

Yup, he just couldn't be nice about it, now could he.

I smirked a little and shifted my head in the direction of the voice.

However, something… seemed off.

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"So, this fool is that Kim Dok-Ja?"

By the time I fully opened my eyes, I discovered myself surrounded by countless Yu Jung-Hyeoks.

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I needed another ten minutes or so to regain my consciousness again.

I had blacked out once more, and after waking up, kept my eyes closed and tried really hard to figure out what the heck was going on here. At least, I needed to get a bead on the current situation.

Firstly, the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' was over.

I was certain of that; messages waiting in the log proved that fact, at least.

[You have acquired the Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness'!]

[Your third Great Fable has completed its 'Climax/轉'!]

[Third condition for the hidden scenario – the 'One Single Fable', has been met!]

[Final Fable is waiting for you.]

[The entirety of is set abuzz over your achievement!]

[Majority of 's Constellations are now paying attention to your Nebula!]

[Regarding your Fable, the absolute majority of the Constellations are…]

I had finally completed the 'One Single Fable's Climax/轉. The energy belonging to an unimaginably enormous Fable was now roiling powerfully inside me.

The Great Fable, the「Season of Light and Darkness.」

It was my first time hearing about such a Great Fable. But that made sense – the collision of the Nameless Mist and the Apocalypse Dragon didn't occur in the original story, after all… With that as the starting point, the entire world-line should begin experiencing sudden and violent change.

The march towards the apocalypse had sped up, so it was only obvious that the rate of the entire scenario's progress would speed up as well.

Secondly, someone did rescue me.

My problem began from this point on. Just who did save me?

"It's no use pretending to be unconscious."

As an aside, the very last face I saw was that of Yu Jung-Hyeok's, coming to save me.

So, maybe it was obvious that I'd end up seeing his face now.

But, uh, the problem was…

"Not just his dumb looks, but it seems that even his head is dumb."

"Just like what I've heard."

…Why were there so, so many 'Yu Jung-Hyeoks' in this place??

Not only that…

In complete stupefaction, I gazed at the five, six 'kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks' currently standing around on top of the bed. Without a doubt, they were Yu Jung-Hyeoks, but all of them were… big-headed chibis with short limbs and about the same size as Kyrgios.

(TL: 'Kkoma: an informal Korean word denoting a child, or in this case, a chibi-like figure.)

…Am I still dreaming??

Right, this had to be a dream. Right, the stress he put me under every single day had piled up and must've caused this horrifying delusion. That had to be it. I hurriedly slapped my cheeks, prompting the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks to speak one after the other.

"He must think this is a dream. Like a fool."

"He may need some time to figure out his current situation first."

"What an annoying bastard. Do we need to wait for him, then?"

I cleanly ignored them and scanned the room I was in. It was a huge circular-shaped room; everything, including the table, the chairs, the other smaller knick-knacks, and even the bed I was sitting on, was circular-shaped.

…Where the hell was I?

I thought hard and long, but nothing came up. A room with such peculiar furnishing would be more than memorable enough, but I couldn't remember ever reading about it in the 'Ways of Survival'.

Wondering if I stumbled into an area for a new scenario accidentally, I summoned the scenario window, only to be smacked in the head with the following message.

[Currently, is in the middle of scenario system maintenance.]

Meaning, there was pretty much nothing I could learn in my current situation.

"Looks like he's almost done with analysing his situation."

"I shall ask again. Are you the one called Kim Dok-Ja?"

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok with a hot-tempered facial expression asked me. Now that I took a closer look, there were different numbered cards stuck to the chest of each kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok, and the one who asked me just now had [999] written on his.

I decided to answer them for the time being. "Correct. I'm Kim Dok-Ja."

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks looked at each other and nodded their heads simultaneously.

These little guys, even though they were much smaller than the original, they acted exactly the same as Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"Looks like the correct one has been brought over, then."

Even the voice was the same, too…

I didn't know what was going on here, but by this time, I had to accept it. I was not stuck in a dream. And thanks to some unknown crazy whims of the Probability, I somehow ended up in a strange, fantastical kingdom where kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks lived.

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"Who are you guys?"

I decided to ask them first. I knew that they wouldn't answer me straightforward if they were anything like the original Yu Jung-Hyeok, but still. One of the kkomas began muttering out. "How pathetic. Can't you tell by looking?"

Yup, thought as much. If I was to be stuck in a world like this, then I'd have preferred to be surrounded by the kind, gentle kkoma version of Yu Sang-Ah, instead. I was wondering how should I retort back in order to hear a proper answer from these guys, but then, the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' with [888] written on his card spoke some rather unexpected words. "With your dull head, you'd never arrive at the correct answer no matter how long you agonise over it. So, I shall tell you. We are a part of the 'great Plotter'."

…Great Plotter? Could it be?

A chilly sensation flitted in and out of my head just then.

The 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' with [777] on his chest must've interpreted my silence on his own way and spoke in a mocking tone. "Your pathetic intelligence shouldn't be enough to understand it now."

Right, these guys, they were definitely Yu Jung-Hyeok. There was absolutely no doubt about that now.

"If you're fully awake, then get up. Someone is waiting for you."

"Who's waiting for me?"

"You'll see when you get there."

I got up unsteadily and followed after that kkoma. The round door opened up and a huge corridor appeared before me. The one to take the lead was the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999]. I followed him. The rest of the kkomas trotted after us, too.

I asked one of them. "What is this place?"

That prompted one of the Yu Jung-Hyeoks following me to speak up. "Eun gui ei soup."

"What was that?"

"It means, the N'Gai's Forest. You're supposed to be a prophet, yet you can't even tell that?"

What the hell. Why did you say that in English, then? (TL note at the end.) The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [666] glared at me as if he was disappointed and turned his head away, obviously unhappy.

It was around then I began thinking that maybe, those numbers represented the regression turns each Yu Jung-Hyeok had lived through.

…What did Yu Jung-Hyeok do around the 666th turn? Was that when he partnered up with the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon?

I spotted the view of a silver forest outside the windows lining up the corridor. N'Gai's Forest, was it? Sounded familiar, as if I had heard about it somewhere. However, I wasn't sure whether this place ever appeared within the 'Ways of Survival'…

It was then when our group encountered another one walking towards from the other side of the corridor.

[So, is he the one the Plotter had brought along?]

No, could I even describe their movements as 'walking'?

Overcome with the sensation of all the hair on my body standing up, I subconsciously gripped the hilt of my [Unbreakable Faith] tighter.

Because, 'Outer Gods' were walking towards us from the opposite side.

Existences that emitted auras incomparably more unstable and ominous than any Constellations. One of them sported a horse's head, while others were monstrous creatures covered in disgusting-looking tentacles. Those tentacles extending up to the air seemed to tilt their 'heads' for a bit, before shuffling closer to my direction. No matter who looked at that, they wouldn't be able to describe their intentions as friendly at all.

Unexpectedly, the one to step in their paths was none other than the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999].

"He's our guest. Don't even think about harassing him."

[But, it should not be a problem just to have a little chat?]

"I shan't permit it."

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] declared as thus, and unsheathed the miniature version of [Heaven Shaking Sword] from his back.

Following that, the kkomas numbers [888], [777], and even the number [666], they all unsheathed their weapons mounted on their backs and hips.

…These guys, could they even really fight? I mean, they all kind of looked like action figures, so…

Maybe the other party thought the same as me, because they began emitting stubbornly persistent hostile aura towards us.

[How dare you… Just because you're the dependents of the 'great Plotter'…]

As the stand-off quickly became even more volatile and the tentacles and the kkomas were about to start fighting, a loud 'Thud' resounded out from somewhere. Outer Gods busy wiggling their tentacles about suddenly all knelt down.

The only one among them still standing was the horse-head that showed animosity towards me.

[■■■…!!]

Another 'Thud' resounded out. Finally, even the horse-head had to slam its head on the floor. Those tremors couldn't have been a simple shockwaves of an earthquake.

No, someone was intimidating these Outer Gods with incredible Status right now.

[Wu, wuwu…]

Outer Gods groaned in pain and moved out of the way. At the end of the corridor, there was an entrance leading to a huge hall. It was an open-type, with the massive circular ceiling decorated by the tumbling, roiling branches of trees. I walked into this hall accompanied by the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks.

Thin rays of sunlight permeating in between the branches illuminated an ancient, worn-out throne right in the middle of that great hall.

No one needed to tell me, but I knew it right away. The being sitting on that throne, he was the king of this forest.

Not only that, I knew who he was already, too.

The scar on his face, revealed under the faint rays of the sun, and the

exact same white coat as mine.

The being I thought I'd not get to meet again was sitting right on that throne.

[It's been a while, Kim Dok-Ja.]

Fin.

I took my time studying the person before my eyes. My heart rate sped up greatly, and my breathing became ragged, as well. Something touched a box of memories that shouldn't be touched, and words began leaking out from this box buried deep within the recess of the darkness.

「"Where is the Arondight? Are you the one hiding it?"」

That was the first time I encountered that dude. While firmly holding me by my collars, he asked me that question.

「"If you're not planning to answer me, then I shall use force to find out."」

The golden [Eye of Sage] gleaming brightly just like back then was right there, waiting.

A migraine assaulted me, and my view distorted like that of an abstract painting. The voice from the memories continued on in the meantime.

「"That 'world' you've shown me, does it really exist?"」

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「Applicable individual isn't a 'Character'.」

There existed certain memories that should never be forgotten even if one wanted to, and perhaps the memories of that regression turn were precisely 'that' for me.

I failed to save Yu Jung-Hyeok of that turn. He left for the next turn, still wearing the white coat.

I had never forgotten the sight of his back, surrounded by bright light and leaving me and Han Su-Yeong of the 1863rd turn behind in complete freedom.

"You are…”

For the longest time, I lost myself and stared at the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' sitting on the throne. The scar on his sunken cheeks, those dark, deeply withdrawn eyes –

everything belonged to the 1863rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok that I remembered.

However, my shock didn't end there.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

…The Secretive Plotter??

Only then did I finally discover the ominous, evil aura rising up from that Yu Jung-Hyeok's entire figure. This 'evil' was different from that of the Demon Kings. No, this was Chaos that the didn't recognise as either 'Good' or 'Evil'.

I was about to say something, but then, something emitted bright light from within my inner pocket.

[Exclusive Attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', is activating!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is reacting to your Attribute.]

As if it was waiting for this moment, the Fable began telling its story. Two Yu Jung-Hyeoks were in a certain place.

「[Go back. You can't save anyone.]」

「"… The Secretive Plotter?"」

As if they were stuck in fast-forward, scenes sped along in my mind. They were fragmented information, sure, but still, they were also plenty enough for me to figure out the current situation.

…So, that's what happened.

I began to gradually understand what was going on here.

Next up was the sight of Yu Jung-Hyeok crashing, Yi Ji-Hye catching him, and finally, the Ark leaving the Isle. It seemed that the had safely escaped from the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has stopped its storytelling.]

I sighed softly under the breath and shifted my gaze over to the existence atop the throne. The 'Secretive Plotter' looked down at me from his spot at the same time.

['The 4th Wall' is strongly activating!]

My heart calmed down and my reasoning returned to me bit by bit. I sucked in a couple of quick but deep breaths and opened my lips to speak. "If you were planning to make me panic using that appearance, then well, congratulations, you succeeded splendidly."

[Have you not used polite speech towards me earlier?]

"I'm merely treating you the way that fits with your choice to appear as Yu Jung-Hyeok."

I appeared completely unflustered by his aura, and as if he was amused by it, the Plotter's lips twitched slightly. Not caring whether he did or not, I simply continued on. "The 'Secretive Plotter'. I suggest we do the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers'."

[And why would I agree to do that?]

"There's no way that you're the 1863rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok. It's impossible, actually."

[What makes you think that?]

"You wish to know? As an aside, there are three reasons, you see."

A faint flash of light flickered in the 'Secretive Plotter's eyes.

"So, are you interested or not?"

[Although tempting, it's not a fair trade, is it.]

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared at me with a pair of quiet, contemplative eyes. He seemed to be thinking about something, and also, maybe a bit angry, as well.

Just how long passed by like this? His left eyebrow quivered rather greatly. I suddenly recalled a certain passage from the 'Ways of Survival' just then.

「Whenever Yu Jung-Hyeok makes a serious decision, his left eyebrow would quiver.」

The Secretive Plotter spoke. [I'll put forth a condition.]

"What kind?"

[I'm sure you're curious as to why I brought you here.]

I nodded my head. Of course I was curious.

[However, you can't ask me about that. Because, I can't tell you. Some answers can only be resolved by you actively searching for the right question first.]

"What kind of a Buddha-like utterance is that??"

[I shall agree to the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' now. You can ask me about three things, but you can't ask me a question related to 'why you've been brought to here'.]

"Is that your condition?"

[One other thing. When you're done with the Three Questions, you must figure out the

'reason you had to be brought' here.]

Now that was something I didn't expect at all and I momentarily panicked. "What if I fail to do that?"

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply. Instead, he raised his lengthy finger and rested it on the armrest of his throne.

Just that simple action alone sent a chill down my spine.

「Can I defeat him in my current condition?」

I began inspecting all the Fables I possessed, from the legendary grade one all the way to the Great Fables…

"It'll be better for you to stop doing something foolish."

It was none other than the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] standing next to me who said that. I smirked and looked down at him. "Are you worried about me?"

"It's annoying to remove a corpse, that's all."

“…What are you exactly, anyway?"

[Are you using your allotted questions, then? Good.]

"No, hang on a minu…”

Before I could finish my sentence, though, messages began floating up.

- Three Divine Questions and Answers has begun.

- Both sides can exchange three questions and three answers.

- Both sides can refuse to answer one question each.

- Questions and Answers will not end until both sides have asked a question and answered it properly.

- You are now using your right to ask the first question.

I caught the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [666] grinning slyly on the side. Sons of bitches.

Still, now that things had ended up like this, I figured it'd not be so bad to hear their story now.

[They are my dependents.]

"I hope you aren't planning to end your answer like that. I'd prefer for you to be a bit more in-depth now that you're planning to tell me things anyway. I'd be eternally grateful if you so graciously explain yourself properly on what your definition of dependents are, whether

it's something like [Avatar] or if it's something similar to the dependents Demon Kings have."

I spoke as cautiously as possible to make sure that what I said didn't sound like the second question. That prompted the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [777] to sigh in admiration and speak up. "He sure talks a lot, doesn't he."

"I wasn't talking to you."

[They are beings that have received my memories.]

- You have acquired the first answer.

"So, it's similar to the [Avatar] skill, then."

[It's my turn. Tell me the first reason why I can't be the '1863rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

"If you were really Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn, then there's no way you'd be wearing that white coat."

[…Why not?]

"The Stigma 'Regression' only sends back one's soul. It doesn't send back the items in your possession. The coat I gave to the 1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok was destroyed as he regressed. So, if you're really from the 1863rd turn, you shouldn't be wearing that coat."

[Interesting. However, this is merely an item I personally purchased.]

"Yu Jung-Hyeok doesn't wear the colour white often."

[…Ask your second question.]

- You are now using your right to ask the second question.

I didn't hesitate and spoke up. "My second question. Are you the

'1863rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok'?"

My question caused the Secretive Plotter's complexion to waver ever so slightly. […

Are you trying to mess with me?]

"No, I'm being dead serious."

[I am Yu Jung-Hyeok who had experienced the 1863rd turn.]

"In the past tense, is it."

[I'm merely the 'Secretive Plotter' now, that's why.]

- You have acquired the second answer.

Unless one placed a special condition, one had to speak only the truth during the

'Three Divine Questions and Answers'. If one didn't, then one would be swept up in the storm of Probability's aftermaths immediately.

However, I didn't spot any signs of the storm around the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[Now, speak the second reason why I can't be the '1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

"There are just too many inconsistencies for you to be the Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn."

[What kind of inconsistencies?]

"If you're really him from the 1863rd, then why did you send me over there to kill yourself? Logically speaking, it doesn't make sense, does it?"

[That's because that action would create me. It's a simple time paradox. I was Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn, and only by you killing me there would I be reborn as the 'Secretive Plotter'.]

"Sounds like you've been rehearsing that answer for a while there. It sounds so natural, too. Even if I assume that you're being truthful, quite unfortunately for you, you seemed less than satisfied after I succeeded in my mission. Also, you looked quite surprised, too."

[…Ask your next question.]

"No, you go ahead first. I'll ask mine last."

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared at me for a little while before eventually opening his lips.

[Fine. What is the final reason why I can't be 'Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn'?]

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"I have a special method to find that out. I possess a skill that allows me to read the inner thoughts of the other party, you see."

[So?]

"But then, the 1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok became an existence that I can't read anymore."

I clearly remembered the moment that Yu Jung-Hyeok left for the next turn. The moment when he broke free from being a 'Character', and even my exclusive skill,

'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' could no longer read him.

[Does that mean you can read my private thoughts?]

"No, I can't read yours also."

[Then, what?]

"However, the reason why I can't is different."

[Activation of the skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been cancelled!]

[Your degree of understanding on the applicable individual is simply far too inadequate!]

[Your degree of understanding simply can't catch up to the Status of the applicable individual!]

I quietly looked up at the messages floating up in the air.

The 'Secretive Plotter' frowned deeply. [I can't accept that as your reason. You are…]

"I'll ask my last question," said I, not giving him any chance to speak. "Back in the planet where I used to live, there happened to be a novel called 'Three Ways to Survive a Ruined World'."

Almost instantly, the surrounding atmosphere changed. The expression on the Secretive Plotter's face sunk to its coldest yet. His eyes had become cold-blooded, as if he'd murder me at any given second.

I desperately resisted that aura and continued on. This was one question that I wanted

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to ask all along. "'Secretive Plotter'. Are you someone who knows the epilogue of that novel?"

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Yu Jung-Hyeok had a dream.

It was a really old and worn-out dream.

For some reason, he was wearing a white coat inside it.

He held the [Heaven Shaking Sword] that fit him like a glove. While gripping that weighty weapon, he was fighting against someone. When he took a closer look, he realised that the person in front of his eyes possessed the exact same countenance as he did.

It was another Yu Jung-Hyeok, but wearing a black coat, instead.

He wasn't sure of why he had to experience such a dream.

'The 1863rd turn.'

Maybe, it was because he ended up running into that guy. That was probably why he had to dream about something like this.

Yu Jung-Hyeok gritted his teeth. The gap he felt between his and the 'Secretive Plotter's overwhelming Status the moment they clashed remained so vividly etched in his mind even now.

Utterly disregarding his sentiments, though, the memories continued to slowly seep into him. He had become the Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn and was swinging his sword around.

「I'll die.」

「I'll regress.」

Every time the swords collided, Yu Jung-Hyeok felt the despair and loneliness of the 1863rd turn. Strangely enough, everything felt so natural to him.

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As if those emotions were his all along, since from a long time ago.

Stab!

Finally, the two swords stabbed deeply into the two stomachs.

「This story will come to an end here.」

「Even then, everything will start from the beginning once more.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok wearing the black coat scattered away first, and soon, even himself began scattering as well. The memories dissipated, and the emotions he barely managed to comprehend began abandoning him. He summoned up the last of his remaining energy and looked behind.

His vision blurred and he couldn't see clearly what was there.

However, it felt as if he had seen a bright and pure star.

「"I had grown curious of that world's ■■."」

「"For the next regression…"」

Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes shot open along with the loud noise of 'Beeeeep!'

He panted heavily and spotted the white ceiling of the hospital room. And then, also heard someone's voice, too.

"Finally, our slumbering prince of the forest has woken up."

He turned his head to the side to find Han Su-Yeong and Jeong Hui-Won. The former bit and broke the lollipop before spitting out the stick and began growling at him.

"Time to tell us just what happened back there, Dear Good Regressor, sir."

Fin.

TL: For some reason, TL note section of the chapters 416 & 417 are not working atm.

I alerted the relevant parties, but who knows when it'll be fixed. Anyways, I'll publish another chapter later today at 19:00 GMT.

Han Su-Yeong's demanding tone prompted Yu Jung-Hyeok to start with his story.

However, his tale sounded incoherent and he repeated himself over and over again.

Ten minutes passed by like that – she eventually stopped listening quietly and spoke up.

"Okay, that's enough. I think you're not in the right frame of mind here, so let me organise everything you said for you. You just indicate to me if I got it right."

Now normally, such a one-sided declaration would've elicited a strong reaction from him, but Yu Jung-Hyeok simply chose to nod his head, his expression dark, gloomy.

Han Su-Yeong immediately began her job. "You went to rescue Kim Dok-Ja. But then, someone else showed up first to snatch him up. And that someone was whom we all know, the 'Secretive Plotter'."

Yu Jung-Hyeok nodded again.

"However, that guy had the exact same face as you and was wearing a white coat."

"Correct."

"What are the odds of that being a fake? I mean, that guy's so hard to

believe, right?

It's possible that the 'Secretive Plotter' disguised himself to look like you."

"No, it couldn't have been a fake."

"How come?"

"He used the Fable that the me from the 1863rd regression turn possessed."

“…You mean, that Immortal whatever chuuni-sounding Fable?"

Han Su-Yeong went "Thought as much," and nodded her head. Her irises expanded

ever so slightly as her Fable kicked into gear once more.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

The only one left out of the loop, Jeong Hui-Won, tried to say something, her voice sounding confused. "What are you two talking about? Are you saying that the

'Secretive Plotter' looks like Jung-Hyeok-ssi?"

Han Su-Yeong glanced at her for a bit, before replying with a long sigh. "Simply put, there are two Yu Jung-Hyeoks in this world-line."

“…Is that even possible?"

"No reason why it can't be, if Yu Jung-Hyeok from another world-line has crossed over to this one."

"You can do that?"

"Well, Kim Dok-Ja went to another world-line through a similar

method, didn't he?

Now, the problem here is, just how powerful a being is he, when he's capable of doing something like this…?"

Even the highest-ranked Constellations from either or couldn't cross to another world-line with their own powers. However, this 'Secretive Plotter'

was powerful enough to deal with the requisite Probability all by himself.

Jeong Hui-Won's jaw dropped slightly as she muttered. "Just from which world-line could he…"

"There is only one with the highest possibility, actually. The one Kim Dok-Ja went to, the 1863rd world-line."

The 1863rd regression turn. The final world-line for Yu Jung-Hyeok as it was written in the 'Three Ways to Survive a Ruined World'.

Yu Jung-Hyeok looked at Han Su-Yeong and asked a question. "How much do you know about that world-line?"

"A bit."

"At the end of that world, the me of the 1863rd turn divided into two and fought against each other. One of them died, and the other regressed."

"I know. I saw it in my dreams several times already."

"…Your dream?"

As if she was sick and tired of the whole thing, she vigorously waved her hands about.

"We don't have the time to get into the details. In any case, you think the current

'Secretive Plotter' is you from the 1863rd regression turn. Am I right?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke up, his face full of dissatisfaction. "It's not a definite thing. There are a few points that don't add up."

"Such as?"

"The strength of the 'Secretive Plotter' far exceeded that of 'me from the 1863rd turn'

that I read about."

"And then?"

"Then…" Yu Jung-Hyeok chewed on his lips for a while. "… I also got the feeling that he was hiding something from me. Such as, his white coat."

"The white coat?"

"My Stigma, 'Regression', doesn't send the items I possess alongside me when I regress. Meaning, there's no reason for him to be wearing that coat."

"Maybe, he likes the white colour?"

"I detest the colour white."

"Isn't it possible that your taste might change?"

"This matter can't be answered as easily as that. This…"

"Are you saying that it's an issue with your gut feeling?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok nodded his head. "It was as if that bastard was mocking me."

"Mocking you?"

"It was as if he deliberately wore that coat."

He massaged his forehead and the words left behind by the 'Secretive Plotter' flitted in and out of his mind.

[…The 3rd turn. You don't remember anyth…]

A weighty silence descended in the room.

Han Su-Yeong was deeply immersed in her thoughts as she rubbed her chin, while Jeong Hui-Won could only smack her lips, not fully getting what was going on.

A while later, the former opened her lips to speak. "Alright, fine. Let's sum it all up.

Logically speaking, the 'Secretive Plotter' must be the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn', but your gut feeling says otherwise. That's it, right?"

"…"

"In that case, let's begin with this assumption first. 'The Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn is not the Secretive Plotter'. Meaning, the Plotter is lying to you."

Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes trembled. "… It's just my feeling, yet you are willing to believe it?"

"It's not just anyone's gut but yours. Isn't it supposed to be, you know yourself the best?"

Han Su-Yeong grinned refreshingly. He then addressed her with a suspicion-filled expression. "Speak your hypothesis, Han Su-Yeong."

"Mm? What do you mean?"

"You already suspect who the 'Secretive Plotter' might be. Am I wrong?"

This time, it was Han-Su-Yeong's eyes to narrow to a slit. "Hmm, since when did you become this quick on the uptake?"

“…It's impossible for you to believe what I say, that's why."

For a short moment there, their glares collided in mid-air. And through that exchange, both of them came to realise just what kind of images were floating up in the heads of the other.

Not too long ago, they had discussed the possible identity of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Back then, Yu Jung-Hyeok opined that the Plotter was 'Kim Dok-Ja from the future', while Han Su-Yeong, she…

"Argh, just how long are you two going to talk among yourselves?! Just who is this

'Secretive Plotter'??"

Jeong Hui-Won's pressing words prompted Han Su-Yeong to cautiously open her lips.

"What I'm about to say is just a hypothesis, nothing more."

"I don't care whether it's a hypothesis or not. I just want to know!"

"I have been curious about something for a really long time, you know?"

"Curious about what?"

"What if, the novel 'Ways of Survival' didn't become reality?"

“…What are you talking about out of the blue?"

"So, like, what if, somewhere out there in the universe, there is a world of 'Ways of Survival', as pure as intended and not been affected by either me or Kim Dok-Ja?" Han Su-Yeong continued on with her explanation. "In that world where neither nor exist, let's say there is

this dumbass

'Yu Jung-Hyeok' who repeatedly goes through countless regressions while losing his comrades over and over again."

“…Wait, you bastard…”

"What if that Yu Jung-Hyeok managed to reach the Conclusion (結) through innumerable losses… What if a version of Yu Jung-Hyeok that saw the end of through his own powers alone existed somewhere in the universe?"

Han Su-Yeong waited for a beat before shifting her gaze over to Yu Jung-Hyeok.

In his violently-rocking eyes, her reflection could be seen.

"And what would a guy like that be thinking about when he's looking at the current

'3rd turn'?"

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The 'Secretive Plotter'.

The Constellation that didn't appear within the original 'Ways of Survival'. Even then, a being that possessed more power than any other Constellations I've met so far.

- 'Secretive Plotter'. Are you someone who knows the epilogue of that novel?

That was the reason why I decided to ask this question. I was sure of guessing the Plotter's true identity correctly as long as he provided me with the 'right' answer.

Eventually, the Secretive Plotter opened his lips. [I am refusing to answer that question.]

"What? No, hang on…"

- Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', has used the 'right to refuse' on the third question.

God damn it, I forgot about that. Both sides could exercise the 'right to refuse' once during this 'Three Divine Questions and Answers'.

The Plotter was looking down at me with a pair of eyes that couldn't be read. For a brief moment there, I witnessed the Probability's sparks envelop his coat.

[I feel tired. Enough. Now, go back.]

"Hang on! The Q&A isn't ove…"

Before I could finish, I was overcome with the sensation of space folding around me, and soon, found myself standing outside the hall.

The sense of dejection rushed in as I stared at the firmly-shut door to the hall.

- 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' has been temporarily suspended.

- You still have one more right to ask a question remaining.

Normally, the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' wasn't a ceremony that one side could wilfully delay like this. However, this 'Secretive Plotter' managed to do exactly that. I couldn't even estimate how powerful a Status he must've possessed in order to make something this unbelievable happen.

I pounded on the hall's door and shouted out. "Open the door! This is

not what we agreed upon! I need to get back to my comrades!"

In that instant, a powerful Status rocked the door and my Incarnation Body was flung away. I staggered back up to my feet and got ready to unleash my own Status.

Unexpectedly, it was the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] who dissuaded me from doing that. "It'll be better if you don't."

I sensed the ominous flow of air beyond the doorway and urgently withdrew my Status. Indeed, this kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok was right. My Incarnation Body was still gravely injured, and the other party was a being so strong that the current me couldn't even guess his actual power level.

"You'll have another chance, Kim Dok-Ja."

“…And when will that be?"

Kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks began looking at me with eyes reserved for when looking at a dumb fool, before one of them spoke up. "Follow us. We're going back to your lodging."

I felt hopelessly lost by the prospect of returning to that circular room again, but as I was now, I didn't have much of a choice.

I could sense the multiple presences of 'Outer Gods' looking at this way from all corners of the corridor. Thankfully, I was a guest of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

It was all too clear to see what would happen if I try to escape and become an

'uninvited guest' in the process.

Go-ooooh…

…Yup, not making a rash decision would be for the best, after all.

Also, it wasn't as if I walked away with nothing from the current situation, anyway.

['The 4th Wall' is faintly vibrating.]

「(There are quite a few faces I haven't seen in awhile. Looks like a group of Shantaks.)」

I was startled by the sudden voice coming from my inside. It was coming through the

[The 4th Wall]'s messaging system.

Judging from the way it spoke…

'…The Devourer of Dreams?'

「(It is indeed I.)」

Now that I thought about it, I had an 'Outer God' residing inside me, didn't I? I completely forgot about it somehow. I began thinking that maybe I could ask for his help in my current predicament.

「(Looks like they are being friendly towards you.)」

'Being friendly? You mean, that?!'

I stared at the 'Outer Gods' raising their tentacles up threateningly in my direction.

The moment our gazes met, the end of one of the tentacles suddenly bloomed open to resemble a horrifying-looking flower.

「(They are curious about you. Now that is a rather uncommon event among Outer Gods.)」

I looked at that 'flower' bud swaying this way and that as if to win me over and shook my head in helplessness.

'…It'll be hard to become friends with those guys.'

「(Hard? Why?)」

'You must know why by now after reading this and that in the Library.'

I walked past the Outer Gods emitting gloomy, foreboding aura and began recalling the final episode of the 'Ways of Survival'.

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「(The final battle of the is related to those 'Outer Gods'.)」

In the original story, Yu Jung-Hyeok lost everything still remaining with him by that point. Every single Incarnation that helped him up until then all died in that war. Died, because of those monsters of Chaos that brought the destruction of the world.

But then, the 'Devourer of Dreams' said something rather unexpected to me. 「(Do you know why Outer Gods have become the Calamities?)」

'That is… '

I seriously pondered it for a moment, only to fall into this strange, inexplicable chain of thoughts.

Indeed, it sure was a strange thing; even a novel as brimming-full of detailed explanations as the 'Ways of Survival' failed to mention the origins of the Outer Gods.

It was at that moment a certain theory popped up in my head.

The true identity of the 'Secretive Plotter' and the origins of the 'Outer Gods'. Could there be some kind of a connection between the two?

Before I could throw out a question regarding that theory, someone engaged me for a chat first.

"I heard that you like reading novels."

It was the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999].

I nodded my head. "Sure, I do. What about it?"

"If you want, I can tell you a short story."

"A story?"

It was then the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks number [666], [777], and [888] all looked at

[999] with baffled expressions. It seemed that this wasn't a part of the plan.

Not even waiting for my reply, the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] began telling his story. "There was a wolf that continued to fight a lonely battle for a very long time.

He had a goal he was chasing after, and there was a question he wanted to ask. For the answer to that question, he continued to fight."

"Is it an allegory?"

"The wolf kept fighting. Hundreds of years, thousands, and maybe even for tens of thousands of years."

I wanted to say that a wolf couldn't possibly live for that long, but regardless, the story continued on.

"The wolf eventually reached the end of the battle and became the 'wolf king'. And he managed to find the answer in his own way. He had to pay the price of losing his entire pack in the process, but in the end, he came to accept that answer. Because, it was the best possible answer that the world could provide him with. Now with that answer, the king began roaming the world."

This was a rather vaguely abstract story, yet…

"But then, one day, the king learned that there was yet another 'pack' existing somewhere."

…Even then, this story sounded undoubtedly familiar, too.

"In that pack, he found the exact same wolf as himself. That wolf possessed the exact same goal as him, and was surviving for the same purpose as him, as well."

I listened to the tale as if I had been entranced by it.

"But then, something was different. The 'wolf' of this pack hadn't lost anything."

Right now, this guy was telling me the story that the 'Secretive Plotter' didn't want to tell me earlier.

"Finding his prey, protecting his pack, the distant goals he longed for – this wolf was achieving all those with the minimal amount of pain. Without losing anything in the process. The king watched this spectacle, and suddenly thought to himself."

Slowly, so very slowly, a chill crept down on my back.

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"If this story is brought to its conclusion as it was, then what was the purpose of the life I've lived so far?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok was now asking straight at me.

"Kim Dok-Ja. Have you ever thought about a life like that before?"

Fin.

TL: Since the TL note section isn't working, I'll revert to leaving the notes here. The

'Conclusion/結' is the last letter of the 'kishotenketsu/gi-seung-jeon-gyeol' that I mentioned in the chapter 409.

All sorts of complicated thoughts rushed past my head.

"I…"

It felt as if someone was ringing a gong right next to my ear. I covered my mouth from the sudden rush of the sick feeling from my stomach. The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks kept looking up at me as I began wobbling about unsteadily.

「Kim Dok-Ja knew who these beings were.」

The final revision of the 'Ways of Survival' spat out bright texts from inside my pocket.

「He knew, but at the same time, he didn't want to know.」

"Kim Dok-Ja?"

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks realised that something was wrong with me and called out.

I needed to stop thinking.

['The 4th Wall' is shaking.]

Stop thinking.

['The 4th Wall' is shaking intensely.]

However, I couldn't.

Pages were flipping over inside my head. As if there was a storm raging about in there, all those pages swirled up and flew at the same time to completely blanket my consciousness.

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“…Hey, you?"

And eventually, my vision was dyed in pitch-black darkness.

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"Looks like he's learned of it now."

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [41] spoke as if it was in passing. Next to him was the 'Secretive Plotter', sitting on the ancient, worn-down throne.

"By any chance, did you deliberately give out that hint?"

[That wasn't my intention.]

"I don't see any reward for you after you even prepared props to put up a show like this."

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [41] spoke as he stared at the Plotter's white coat.

It was the same coat as the one Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn wore.

The Plotter felt that stare. While taking the coat off, he spoke up. [I wasn't putting on a show. That guy from the 1863rd should've been a part of me originally. Just like all of you.]

"However, he opened the door and left without warning, didn't he. While leaving behind that coat, too."

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [41] took over the white coat. As if the two had been talking about something forbidden up until now, a short silence descended between them.

The 'Secretive Plotter' wordlessly extended his hand towards the empty air. A circular table suddenly materialised next to the old throne. There was a wine glass filled with red wine on top of it. He lightly picked the glass up.

[It seems that the scenario is progressing far quicker than expected. Its ripening degree is nothing to write home about.]

"It's all because of that fool, Kim Dok-Ja."

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[Has the Dokkaebi King made his move yet?]

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [41] flipped through the message log in the empty air. "No, not yet. However, Great Dokkaebis are now moving behind the scenes. The Wennys have contacted us, as well."

[It'll soon start, then.]

"I guess so."

Two Yu Jung-Hyeoks stopped talking for a little while. Ominous howls could be heard coming through the cracked walls of this palace built to resemble a circle. Those were the cries of the Outer World's hounds searching for them.

The 'Secretive Plotter' opened his lips. [41st. You are the most similar 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'

when compared to me.]

"What an honour that is."

[You'll soon die.]

"Have we not come this far for that exact purpose?"

They stopped talking again. Pale-white light suddenly glowed in the empty air, and soon, 's broadcast screen appeared there. The 'Secretive Plotter' flipped through the screens as if he was bored and spoke up.

[There isn't much left till the end of this long story, then.]

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When I opened my eyes, I found myself inside the Library.

「Kim Dok Ja, so an noy ing.」

I heard the Wall's faint voice and shook my head to regain my wits.

'Sorry about that'.

The lights from the lanterns brightened up the dim darkness. It seemed that I was

sucked into [the 4th Wall]'s interior once more. The Wall had protected my mind from breaking down, in other words.

I massaged my pulsing head and took quick, short breaths. I needed a bit more time before my mind cleared up sufficiently enough. How long did it pass by like that?

Eventually, only one line remained etched inside my once-chaotic mind.

「The 'Secretive Plotter' is Yu Jung-Hyeok from the original 'Ways of Survival'.」

He was not the Yu Jung-Hyeok I met in the 1863rd turn, nor the guy I experienced the 3rd turn with.

No, he was someone I had never met before.

Indeed, he was Yu Jung-Hyeok who witnessed the conclusion of the

before the '3rd turn' even had the chance to begin.

- Hang on, author-nim! What will happen to Jung-Hyeok-ee now? When it's like this…

I recalled the last comment I made on the final chapter of the 'Ways of Survival'. That novel came to an end and left everything up to the epilogue. The answer to the question I was dying to know…

I slowly got up from the spot and took a look at the bookshelves around me.

[Yu Jung-Hyeok, records from the 4th turn, eighth volume]

I stood there dazed after looking at the book's spine, revealed under the gentle light.

The stories that I grew up reading were here.

I slowly reached out towards that book's spine. My fingertip touching the end of the spine trembled faintly. This was the story that I read over and over again. Each of those phrases was my life, my blood, and my flesh. But now, why did such a story feel so…

…Alien to me now?

I forced myself to grab that book, hoping to get rid of this feeling. This was a story that I could enjoy reading regardless of what time it was and which page it was, anyway.

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This story wouldn't betray me. If I read it, I should feel better. Just like how it always did.

Rather coincidentally, the page I flipped to was the scene of Anna Croft and Yu Jung-Hyeok in a face-off.

The novel's Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke his line.

「"This is because of you."」

My hands trembled as I flipped the page. I couldn't work up the courage to read what was on the next page. Maybe, I didn't have the qualification to do so, too.

I was happy reading this story?

My entire life amounted to nothing but me reading about someone else's sorrow and pain? In that case, how was I any different from those damn Constellations up in the sky?

「(What will you do?)」

I looked behind to find Nirvana there.

「(There are two 'Yu Jung-Hyeoks' in this world.)」

The librarians had gathered around me. Three pairs of eyes were now looking at me, pitying me. Nirvana, Simulation, and then, the Devourer of Dreams.

I met each of their gazes and asked. '…What do you guys think?'

「(Do you wish to acquire the opinion of this one?)」 Nirvana stepped forward to reply.

He sounded confident as if he knew the right answer already. 「(No need to fall into a dilemma. Every creature started as one in the beginning, after all.)」

"You're going on about that 'one' again?"

「Everything was one, to begin with, so what does it matter if there are two or more Yu Jung-Hyeoks? Becoming one with all the Yu Jung-Hyeoks is the utmost important providence of the cosmos…!」

Yup, it was my fault to ask this idiot in the first place.

I shifted my gaze and discovered that the master of the cinema dungeon, Simulation, looking back at me.

「(It seems that you're suffering under the weight of the guilty conscience.)」

Guilty conscience – was it alright to bluntly label what I feel into that sort of emotion?

My hand holding the book trembled, causing the pages themselves to tremble as well.

「(Why do you feel guilt? Are you tormented by the misfortune he had suffered?)」

"I'm not too sure."

「(Regardless of what, you can't save him. He has already lived a life like that, and you simply read about his story. That is the summary of your reality.)」

His voice, tinged with a certain logical sense, contained the wisdom of an ancient being who had read many stories for the longest time.

The last one to speak was the 'Devourer of Dreams'. It pushed up its glasses with its tentacles and spoke as if to mock me. 「(Oh, dear Constellation. Do you honestly believe that the great Plotter is asking for your sympathy?)」

The moment I heard those words, my emotions cooled down as if they were bathed in icy-cold water.

It was correct. This emotion I've been feeling was the same thing as me insulting every story I had read.

Besides, now wasn't the time to swim in these trivial emotional mires.

Nirvana glibly continued on. 「(Looks like you've finally regained some of your lost senses.)」

Right now, I need to worry about much more realistic problems first.

'I need to return to my comrades, but I don't have any methods of

getting out of here.'

The 'Devourer of Dreams' nodded its head. 「(I'm sure that's the case. Within the N'Gai's Forest, he's basically the god, after all.)」

'Do you know something, by any chance?'

「(I do know, but there's not much meaning even if I explain. Because, you'd get only further away from their origins the more you try to explain anything related to the

'Outer Gods'. Just like what the 'Recorders of Fear' have done.」

'Recorders of Fear'…I seemed to have heard a similar story once before.

Meanwhile, the 'Devourer of Dreams' continued on. 「(The entrance and the exit lay in the same place. In most cases, a door with 'Pull me' written on it would open when you push at it. You must figure out why you're here. When you do, you will naturally discover the exit yourself.)」

I heard what the 'Secretive Plotter' said earlier after hearing those words.

- When you're done with the Three Questions, you must figure out the 'reason you had to be brought' here.

The reason why I had to come here.

When I thought about it, maybe the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' being suspended was a fortunate thing for myself.

I might have been able to guess the identity of the 'Secretive Plotter', but I hadn't been able to figure out the reason why he brought me to this place.

That guy, why did he bring me here?

「(He's a being who witnessed the end of one world.)」 The 'Devourer of Dreams'

spoke as if it already knew what my question was. 「(What can compel a being who already knows of ■■ to throw himself back into the great cycle once more…?)」

In that moment, I recalled a certain moment in my life. It was a piece of my memory from a very long time ago. I was a young boy, sitting opposite my mother and reading a book resting on my lap.

- Dok-Ja-ya, please read it again.

What would be the reason for an existence that knew the story inside out to read it again?

「Yo u go ou t now Kim Dok Ja.」

In the following moments, my view broke up and I was swept up in a whirlpool. The sight of the Library scattered away like smoke. Everything spun around until my consciousness returned to where it belonged. Still suffering from the slight case of migraine and dizziness, I slowly opened my eyes along with a soft groan.

[Current Incarnation Body recovery rate: 34%]

Drips of Fable fell one at a time from the IV pack filled with Fables, currently attached to my arm. And there was information on my Incarnation Body floating up on the display in the air.

[Currently, the injection of healing medicine cannot be administered due to the extensive damage to your foundational Fable.]

[Natural recovery is recommended.]

[You currently possess high resistance against elixirs.]

[You can consume a new type of elixir to boost the rate of recovery.]

I struggled to push myself up. Every corner of my body still ached like crazy, but still, movements in my joints felt a lot smoother than before.

"Biyu."

As expected, Biyu didn't reply. However, I was greeted by another message, instead.

[You're currently connected to a temporary channel.]

A temporary channel – meaning, this place was not an official scenario location of the

.

"Total numbers of connections."

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[Number of Constellations currently connected to the temporary channel: 2]

It was saying '2', which was as clear as you could get, as much as the number of clicks the 'Ways of Survival' got.

I began thinking. If I wanted to escape from this place, there was little choice but to have another face-to-face with the 'Secretive Plotter'.

But, I wasn't sure if he'd meet me again that easily.

In that case, there was only one other method left.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is calling the Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter'.]

If the bastard didn't want to meet me, then…

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is looking at the Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter'.]

Then, until he looked at me again.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is throwing a temper tantrum in the Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter's' direction.]

Yup, I just needed to annoy him.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is…]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is glaring at you.]

As expected, a response came. Just before I could send back another message, though, the door to my room flung open with some force.

"You insane fool. Why are you making a ruckus like this?"

"Oh, so you came."

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [666] was glaring at me. "If you want something, you can simply call for me. So, stop with the barrage of noisy indirect messages."

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Since these kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks were all dependents of the 'Secretive Plotter', they must've been able to hear my indirect messages, too.

In any case, that [666] seemed to be tasked with caring for my well-being. What surprised me there, though, was that he held what looked to be some kind of a smartphone-like device. Unfitting for a mini chibi, the phone itself was the regular 'big'

size.

"Why are you looking at that thing? Were you playing a mobile game?"

I got up from the bed and quickly snatched the phone away from the unguarded hands of this idiot.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's original profession was the 'Pro Gamer', so it wouldn't be all that strange for him to play a game of some ki…

…Eh?

"Give it back to me this instant!!"

[666] leaped up and smacked me in the waist while roaring out in anger. I simply stared at the display in pure stupefaction, though.

…Hey, this isn't a game, now is it??

[You're currently connected to two channels.]

[You're currently in the area outside the scenario's control. You are now connected to the official channel via a proxy channel.]

The smartphone's screen was displaying a rather familiar background.

「"Dok-Ja ahjussi is alright. He's definitely alive. I can tell."」

Just below the [LIVE] icon, indirect messages from Constellations I was familiar with were cascading down as if it was some kind of a chatroom.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is nodding his head energetically.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is consoling the members of

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Company>.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…]

What shocked me even more could be found at the bottom of the chatroom display.

[Constellation name: Secretive Plotter]

[You're currently a VIP subscriber.]

[Due to one of the VIP membership perks, you are exempt from the cost of indirect messaging.]

- Please select the expression you wish to convey.

[Currently, you have selected (Stay Strong).]

- Please enter the amount of coins to be sponsored. (You can sponsor from 50 Coins upwards in the applicable channel.)

[(No amount has been entered) C]

- Please enter the message you with to convey through indirect messaging.

[Forgetaboutfoolslikehimandchooseanewleader (You have exceeded the word length input limit.)]

I stopped reading there and looked down at the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [666]

in sheer dumbfoundedness. "Hey, I'm asking you just in case…"

"…"

"By any chance, the one who sent all those indirect messages was…"

"It's merely my turn today! Give up the device immediately or I'll kill you, Kim DokJa!!"

The deeply-blushing kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [666] held the [Heaven Shaking Sword] tightly and panted angrily. Only then did I finally figure out something that I failed to understand until now.

So, I had these kkoma idiots to thank for all those countless indirect messages the

'Secretive Plotter' allegedly sent my way.

「"When he comes back this time, let's just throw him inside a coffin and bury him somewhere. It'll be better to let him out only after the scenarios are over."」

Yi Ji-Hye said something hair-raisingly scary just then. I watched the kids sitting together on the screen and my heart began aching as if I had been sneak attacked just now.

It hadn't been that long since we parted ways, yet I missed them already.

Whatever the cost, I had to return to them.

Because, the 'Apocalypse Dragon' scenario was already over, so if I didn't hurry back to where they were, then…

Tsu-chuchuchut!

That was when the Probability's sparks went on a wild dance; one by one, Dokkaebis began appearing in the skies of Seoul. I spotted Bihyung among them as well.

「[New main scenario has arrived!]」

God damn it… So soon?

Bihyung inside the screen began speaking up. 「[. It's now time to leave for the Final Scenario.]」

Fin.

(TL: No second chapter today, but I'll try to make up for it tomorrow.)

“…Final Scenario?"

Jeong Hui-Won frowned deeply while staring at the blinking message in the air.

The 'Final Scenario' was already starting?

The Apocalypse Dragon scenario was supposed to be 89th. So, did this mean that the 90th scenario was the last?

It wasn't just her who was confused by this, though. Every Constellation still riding on the Ark exchanged glances and began murmuring among themselves.

[…What does that even mean?]

[Wait, did the 99th scenario start already?]

Some of them even began lodging complaints to Dokkaebi Bihyung, too.

[What kind of an underhanded scheme is this? It's not the time for the Final Scenario to start…]

[Are you planning to take away separately?]

Bihyung studied the reactions of these Constellations before shaking his head. [The invitations to the Final Scenario are being issued since from a while ago. More correctly, ever since all of you decided to wake the 'Apocalypse Dragon', that is.]

His declaration caused the Constellations to become noisy among themselves. A few of them seemed to have realised something, and while looking around the vicinity in worried eyes, began shouting out loudly.

[I-in that case, send us to the Final Scenario, too!]

[T-that's right! We also possess the qualifications!]

Bihyung spoke as if to pacify them. [I'm sorry, but I'm not in charge of you, everyone.

But, if you possess the requisite qualifications, then the assigned Dokkaebis will arrive soon to guide you, so please rest easy.]

However, his tone of voice was definitely not a friendly one.

[That is, as long as you are qualified, of course.]

Complexions of the Constellations paled visibly. And soon afterwards, the Ark made another announcement.

- Next stop is the 8612th planetary system.

The 8612th planetary system. Where the planet Earth was, the home to .

Bihyung shifted his gaze over the members of as if he could no longer delay the matter.

[Well, now. Everyone from , please gather around.]

That prompted Han Su-Yeong to step forward. "No, hang on a minute. We finished the last scenario only a few days ago, you know?"

"Please let us head over to Earth first. We haven't completed our preparation for the next scenario yet."

Jeong Hui-Won also pitched in. One by one, the comrades gathered around – Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Gil-Yeong, and Yi Ji-Hye, too… They all carried confused, unsettled expressions.

Bihyung sighed softly under his breath. [As I thought, it's really inconvenient without Kim Dok-Ja around, isn't it. If only he was here, he'd have understood it already.]

"Just what's the reason for hurrying us up like this? If you can't give us a proper explana…"

Bihyung's lips quietly moved.

- There aren't that many entry tickets remaining. You gotta go there as soon as possible to secure yours.

Those words were conveyed through the 'Dokkaebi Communication'.

The members of the looked at each other at the same time. If this Dokkaebi was sending a covert message like this, it could only mean that he didn't want other Constellations to hear him.

However, what was with this 'entry ticket' thing? Did they need such a thing for the next scenario?

Yu Jung-Hyeok suddenly made his entrance from behind the hesitating group. "Let's get going."

"But, hang on!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok remained adamant even when Jeong Hui-Won tried to stop him. "The Final Scenario won't start just because we enter its location. It's the right decision to heed his recommendation."

"But, what about Hyeon-Seong-ssi…"

"Entrust him to my master."

Jeong Hui-Won hurriedly looked at Han Su-Yeong. The latter seemed to be thinking about something for a bit and then, grabbed the former's shoulder. "… For the time being, let's go there. There must be a reason if he's being so insistent like this. Maybe, Kim Dok-Ja might have gone ahead of us and is waiting there. It's worth checking it out."

The words 'Kim Dok-Ja' brought about resolute determination on the members'

expressions.

"I agree."

"Me too! Me too!"

Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Gil-Yeong, and even Yi Ji-Hye all quickly made up their minds. Jeong Hui-Won seemed to be worried about Yi Hyeon-Seong until the end, but eventually

nodded her head after listening to Yu Jung-Hyeok's words.

"We might be able to find a way to revive the 'Emperor of Steelsword' sooner by going to the Final Sscenario's location."

“…In that case, I don't have a reason to hesitate anymore."

[Well, let's get going, then.]

Along with Bihyung's voice, 's surroundings were dyed in bright light in an instant.

[Scenario transmission is starting!]

Perhaps due to the higher-ranking Dokkaebi's authority being invoked, the time it took to move through the portal was short and comfortable.

In the blink of an eye, the group found themselves transported to the middle of pitch-black outer space. More specifically, on top of a semi-transparent disk that allowed them to look down on the universe itself.

"Where…"

The disk was protected by a dome-shaped barrier with only one entrance/exit, while there were several Dokkaebis standing in front of this very doorway.

Yu Jung-Hyeok took a look at the Dokkaebis once, and then at the doorway, before muttering to himself. "It's the ."

"You know where this is?"

He nodded his head at Han Su-Yeong's question. "It's where the Bureau's headquarters is. You have to pass through here in order to enter the Final Scenario's location."

"Sounds like you've been here before? Were you caught by the 「Probability Appropriateness Evaluation」 or something?"

"No, it's my first time here."

"Then how did you know? Did the records from the 1863rd turn mention this place?"

"That is…"

Suddenly, he grabbed his temples and staggered unsteadily.

He knew of the records from the 1863rd turn, thanks to the 'Secretive Plotter'.

However, those records didn't contain any information regarding this scenario. Kim Dok-Ja hadn't said anything in particular, either.

In that case, how did he know of this information already?

Tsu-chuchut…

Sparks faintly danced just above his coat. Yi Ji-Hye sensed that something was wrong and as she reached out to him, rays of bright light exploded from the Gate's vicinity.

Another batch of Constellations, as well as Dokkaebis, warped into this place.

[Constellation-nims, please, it's this way.]

Constellations and Incarnations brushed past their group in perfect order under the guidance of Great Dokkaebis. And among them walking past , was 'Heoche', the very same Dokkaebi who showed up to offer them a choice earlier.

[Didn't I say it before? That you'll all regret your decision.]

Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok glanced at each other after hearing that Great Dokkaebi's passing voice.

Something was off about this whole thing.

Quite unlike this Great Dokkaebi's group that went past the Gate rather easily, wasn't even able to approach its vicinity at all.

Bihyung was standing by the entrance, and the group could hear him arguing with the gatekeepers there.

[What is the meaning of this? We've already gone through all the procedures. These Incarnations possess the right qualifications to enter the Final Scenario. So, please step aside.]

As the Gate emitting pure light swallowed up the Great Dokkaebi's group, it stopped

first and whispered something to the captain of the gatekeepers.

Unable to wait any longer, Bihyung stepped forward, only for this captain to open its lips. [Higher-ranking Dokkaebi Bihyung, you and can't enter the Final Scenario.]

*

When I was young, I often had dreams where I became Yu Jung-Hyeok. Well, he occupied the places inside me that should've been filled by the likes of Superman or Batman, that was why.

Not only that, I often acted as him even when I was wide awake. I got beaten up because of that, and also experienced some pretty horrible ordeals, too.

Even then, I managed to survive until now because I became such a 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.

「"Captain, let's hurry and head over to the next scenario!"」

Of course, it wasn't only Yu Jung-Hyeok who made an appearance in my dreams.

Indeed, the brave Yi Ji-Hye was there, too. And…

「"Maintenance of the equipment is complete, Jung-Hyeok-ssi."」

…The dependable Yi Hyeon-Seong was also there, and finally…

「"Captain, are you alright? Your complexion isn't so good…"」

…The thoughtful Shin Yu-Seung was there, too.

In a way, they were like my family. If Yu Jung-Hyeok was my parent, then Yi Hyeon-Seong was my older brother, Ji-Hye was my older sister, and Yu-Seung was my friend.

I loved their stories. I cheered them on during their fights, and took a peek at their misfortunes. And I…

…I wasn't really sure if this could serve as an excuse, but I truly wished for them to be happy.

What had happened to them by now, I wonder?

The last thing I saw was Yu Jung-Hyeok's face.

「"It's all because of you."」

Suddenly, my view spun around. I spat out a pained groan and opened my eyes.

"Your complexion isn't so good. Are you alright?"

I was wondering why my chest felt heavy, but as it turned out, the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] was standing on it. He used his mini [Heaven Shaking Sword] to pick up a cup resting on the nearby table and handed it over to me.

"Drink."

“…Thanks."

My mind gradually woke up after drinking some cold water.

[Current Incarnation Body recovery rate: 36%]

Although negligent, my Incarnation Body was slowly recovering. Of course, it wasn't enough to make me feel satisfied.

- . It's now time to leave for the Final Scenario.

The sight I saw in [666]'s smartphone last night didn't want to leave my head. My companions were already facing the offer of the Final Scenario. I no longer had time to waste here.

"You can leave whenever you want. As long as you can figure out the answer yourself, that is."

"It's that thing again?"

I grumbled unhappily and sat up, but then, the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999]

threw an unexpected question in my way. "Name the type of food you hate."

"Why, all of a sudden?"

"Shut up and answer the question."

I was momentarily overwhelmed by the little guy's force. "… It's tomato."

He pulled out a small memo pad from his inner pocket and jotted down 'tomato' in neat handwriting.

Why was he writing that down, anyway?

"What about your favourite food?"

“…Murim dumplings with chicken broth."

My answer prompted a change of expressions in [999]'s face. "Looks like your tongue knows its stuff."

Well, sure, my three-inch tongue helped me live this far, that's true.

"81st turn is in charge of cooking. His swordsmanship might be lacking, but he's quite talented when it comes to making food. Look forward to it."

Now that I thought about it, 81st turn Yu Jung-Hyeok learned quite a lot of cooking skills for some reason, didn't he? It seemed that he was in charge of meals in this place, then.

[999] finished jotting down on the memo, jumped off from the bed and glanced back at me. "If you're uncomfortable about something, tell me. Even a dumb guest is a guest nonetheless."

"There is something I want to ask, actually."

"As long as it's not an unnecessary one."

"Why did Yu Jung-Hyeok become an 'Outer God'?"

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok's expression hardened ever so slightly. I continued with my questioning. "Not only that, he even acts as a Constellation with a moniker of 'Secretive Plotter', too… The 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' that I know of would've never done something like this. He's…"

One of the things I realised after coming here was that almost all the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks didn't really like me. Quite often, they would try to pick a fight with me for no

reason, and rarely did they provide a proper answer whenever I asked them about something.

However, this [999] was different. There was that story about the wolf, too. It was as if he wanted to tell me something here.

Thankfully, my gut feeling wasn't wrong.

"Just what is the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' you think you know?"

His voice contained faint traces of scorn. I didn't know what to say.

"Do you still believe that you can understand someone through just a few lines of text in a couple of chapters?"

I couldn't reply.

I wasn't sure why. It could be because I thought that I had no right to answer him, or maybe I couldn't find the correct words to say.

[999] quietly studied the indecisive me, before shooting me a criticising glare. He then pulled some things out from a drawer attached to the table to throw them at me. "I heard that you like to

read. Maybe, reading that might help you. That book is written for the purpose of understanding the fear of the unknown by foolish humans like you."

What [999] threw at me were several books. I picked one of them up to take a look.

[A Brief Overview of Outer Gods – regarding the 'Secretive Plotter' and the 'Most Ancient Dream']

< Episode 79. The Secretive Plotter (5)> Fin.

TL: The raw clearly said that and other Constellations are still riding on the Ark, not back in Seoul already. I know it's different from how the previous chapter ended, but it is what it is…

ED: It's probably like riding a bus. Even when you're arriving at your stop, you're still riding the bus 'til you actually disembark.

TL: Prolly. XD. Oh and another chapter at 19:00 GMT today. As long as nothing happens

this side. Fingers crossed.

This was a book written by the 'Recorder of Fear'.

The 'Recorders of Fear' – the very first humans to encounter the Outer Gods, and the writers who also spread the word on their existences.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

[Exclusive Attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', is activating!]

I couldn't help but feel my anticipation grow after seeing the book's title. To think, this would be a story regarding the 'Secretive Plotter' and the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

The Plotter often brought up this 'Most Ancient Dream', so I hoped that this could be an important opportunity to learn more about that 'thing'.

I didn't even notice that [999] had disappeared by then, all my being focused on reading this book.

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Exactly eight hours later, I closed the book's cover, my face one of pure stupefaction.

"This…"

I knew of a perfect expression to describe this sort of book.

"It's even more boring than 'Ways of Survival'…"

I had no idea who wrote it, but if this book got published in the various platforms of the 21st century, then I was sure of it tanking as badly as the 'Ways of Survival'.

Not only was it boring, it was also quite a hard read, too.

“…Just what on earth was it even talking about?"

However, there was this one thing that I did understand. Which was, there were five great 'Outer Gods' in the expansive [Great Hole].

「The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

「The 'Master of the Sunken Island', the calamity of the world in the west.」

「The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the ruler of the northern universe.」

「The 'King of Silver Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.」

「And finally, the 'Great Plotter' that crawls from the place of nothing.」

“…This set-up is even cooler than the Ways of Survival."

In the context of the things so far, this 'Great Plotter' moniker seemed to signify the

'Secretive Plotter'. Actually, there were several interesting parts among the texts related to the Plotter himself.

「A few Recorders of Fear who had encountered the 'Great Plotter' came to learn that he was searching for the 'Most Ancient Dream'… (Omitted)… Those lucky Recorders were able to ask the Great Plotter about the identity of the 'Most Ancient Dream'.」

「[It is the beginning of this universe and the master of the gigantic cogwheel. My oldest mortal enemy and my parent. And the one who decides the end of everything.]」

「The few Recorders of Fear managed to see the Great Plotter's expression the moment those words were spoken, and they fainted right away. After waking up, they could no longer remember who they were anymore.」

…Records written by a bunch of people who couldn't even remember themselves? Was that why the author of this book was simply stated as a 'Recorder of Fear', instead?

I wanted to read more about either the 'Great Plotter' or the 'Most Ancient Dream', but the majority of the book didn't contain records of those two, but rather, a collection of boring anecdotes related to the general overview of the 'Outer Gods', instead.

Even the plot development was all over the place.

Quite often, a story would end abruptly without warning just as it was getting interesting, or the sequence of events would be jumbled up even within the anecdote itself and made it utterly impossible to make heads or tails of it.

I wasn't just talking about one story here, but every single one of them, so I just couldn't get immersed within the book at all.

「(What an interesting story.)」

It was none other than Simulation who decided to butt in.

'…Which part was interesting to you?'

「(This book has been deliberately engineered this way.)」

'Are you saying that it was written deliberately to be boring?'

「(The message this story wishes to convey is quite clear.)」

'If the author wanted to convey a message, then he should've written it in a way that others could understand.'

「It's written with the idea that 'Those who can't understand it, will not'.)」

'Pardon?'

I thought I heard a light sigh, and then tiny sparks danced in front of my eyes. The power leaking out from [The 4th Wall] flipped through the pages of the book and began extracting several paragraphs.

And once those seemingly disparate paragraphs, taken from different short stories, were connected, they formed the following lines of texts.

「Emotions, passed down from the distant, remote universe. That is the flow of the ancient times that this writer could never follow after. We were terrified.」

「They were like monsters from a universe we couldn't recognise.」

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「This 'Fear' didn't stem from what we could predict. This was pure 'Terror' emanating from those that we could never understand.」

「With great difficulty, we assigned names to each of those Terrors. We wanted to pretend that, by assigning names to the creatures of the unknown, we'd be able to understand them.」

Only now did it feel like the message this book wished to convey was revealing itself.

「Of course, whether our attempt has any meaning or not, only they can decide.」

After reading that resignation-filled paragraph, I thought I could see why the 'Outer Gods' ridiculed these 'Recorders of Fear' so much. All those Modifiers attached to them, strictly speaking, didn't reflect their original essence.

「If you, the reader, meet them someday, remember this. The one who stares into the abyss will have no choice but to either go mad, or become the abyss itself.」

Having finished my second read-through, I closed the book while feeling despondent.

“…I've gained pretty much nothing here."

In the end, there was only one thing I got to figure out from this book.

「'Outer Gods' are unfathomable creatures.」

Those were some pretty irresponsible words, that's for sure.

Such words could be applied to just about anybody, not only to the 'Outer Gods', now couldn't they?

「'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is an unfathomable creature.」

「'Han Su-Yeong' is an unfathomable creature.」

You could say something like that and it'd still fit the context.

Even if it was not an 'Outer God', it was true that we couldn't fully understand each other. We might feel like we could, but that was nothing more than a momentary

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delusion on our part.

Some time ago, I had a conversation with Jang Ha-Yeong regarding this topic.

The 'Devourer of Dreams' silently listening to my thoughts began cackling away.

「(You're correct. That's the message this book wishes to convey. In the end, we are all simply 'Outer Gods' to each other.)」

I put the book down and looked outside the window. It was circular-shaped, just like the circular room it was in.

Sunlight poured in faintly. I spotted the 'Outer Gods' enjoying the sunbath in between the forest's dense foliage. Some of them discovered me and waved their tentacles about. As if I was looking at a scary scene from a fairy tale or something, I continued to stare at those tentacles. It could very well be that their outer appearance didn't reflect their true nature.

Now that I took a closer look, their movements seemed to be rather graceful, too.

「(Only those who reach out can discover the truth.)」

Maybe, there was no need for me to read that book from the get-go. Well, 'Outer Gods'

were everywhere in this place, weren't they.

I sneakily observed my surroundings for a bit, before activating [Miniaturisation] to slip outside the window.

I floated up and approached one of the 'Outer Gods'. It also extended its tentacle towards me. I didn't sense hostility behind that action.

「I d on't car e if yo u reg ret it.」

Even after [The 4th Wall] warned me, I still reached out towards that tentacle.

I always regretted about something in my life. However, my regret over the things I hadn't done was way bigger than for those that I did do.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

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The very last scenario of this was a great war against the 'Outer Gods'.

And through that war, the 'Outer Gods' would disappear from this

world.

They were the only creatures in the 'Ways of Survival' without any detailed explanation.

I wanted to ask them. Ask them just where they came from.

Ask them for what purpose they were fighting against the .

Not even once during the original story did the 'Outer Gods' reply to those questions.

They only roared on, or spat out incomprehensible utterances and fought against the Constellations. That was all.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

['The 4th Wall' is warning you!]

I grasped the Outer God's tentacle. As if it was responding to my touch, the tentacle wrapped around my hand like a tree's vine.

The 'Recorder of Fear' said this.

They said that the 'Outer Gods' were unfathomable, unexplainable existences. They said that no one knew where they came from or what their real identity was.

They could be right. My current actions might be completely meaningless.

We might end up fighting each other later, like how it was in the original storyline, and bring forth the wretched destruction and ruination to all.

Suddenly, my surroundings seemed to be blanketed by a slow-moving melody. Under the brilliant sunlight, 'Outer Gods' were, one by one, bowing their heads in my direction.

[Fable, 'The One Who Is Loved by All', has begun its storytelling.]

Tiny flowers began blooming on the vines created by the Outer Gods, as if they were giving me their precious hidden something. Fragrance wafted out from those flowers, soon becoming lyrics to a song. And afterwards, it formed a story.

「"Captain."」

It was a fragment of a very old memory.

「"Yu Jung-Hyeok-ssi."」

I listened to those voices like an entranced man. They belonged to different people, but I could accurately guess the owners of those voices with my eyes closed.

I had been thinking about this for a long while.

If the 'Secretive Plotter' was Yu Jung-Hyeok from the original story, and just like what he had shown me, if the countless world-lines of the 'Ways of Survival' existed out there, then…

The innumerable failed stories within those regression turns, just where would they have ended up in?

「"In the next life, without a doubt."」

「"Even if you regress many more times, I'll always accompany you, captain…”」

The surging waves of memories swept me up in an instant.

These memories lacked any obvious starting point, and they were not consistently linked to each other, either. However, I was able to follow them. As if I was connecting the constellations that couldn't be connected previously.

Perhaps only I was able to connect them in this world.

And in that moment, I understood.

I understood what the 'Outer God' was, why Yu Jung-Hyeok from the original story had to become one willingly.

…And, why he had no choice but to become the 'Secretive Plotter'.

The story of pain that went on for tens of thousands, hundreds, maybe even for millions of years. Stories discarded by the world-line and couldn't be acknowledged as 'Fables'. And the fragments of Fables that became the subconsciousness of the

worlds, drifting around in the universe and ruminating on the ancient memories.

Finally, the voices of those that were not saved.

[Ooooooooohhhh…]

Branches of the 'Outer God' enveloping my surroundings like a garden began expanding. I couldn't take my eyes off these memories, even though it felt as if I'd asphyxiate from the crashing waves of them.

「"Please, remember us."」

I grabbed hold of the Fables crumbling away at my touch and began sobbing. These were simply far too precious. And I felt uncontrollable sorrow now that no one remembered them.

I could neither understand or change this.

All I could do, whether it was back then or now, was to simply 'read' them.

'Outer Gods' began screeching out all at the same time.

[YouknowusYouknowusYouknowusYouknowus]

[WhoareyouWhoareyouWhoareyouWhoareyou]

The vines began tightening around me. I heard sobbing noises coming from the Outer Gods. It sounded like they were happy. Or maybe, sad.

It was the ancient cry resonating from the distant other side of the

universe.

「Tol d y ou not to do it.」

Outer Gods rushing towards me soon formed a dense, impenetrable forest. Vines grew and grew, choking me harder and tighter as if to swallow me whole. As if, they wanted to accept me as one of them. As if, they wanted me to join them and stay forever.

I somehow managed to regain my wits and struggled hard to get out of there while pushing the vines away. Unfortunately, the more I did that, the tighter their restrictions became.

[DON'T GO]

[HOW COME]

I couldn't afford to get devoured here.

If I really wanted what's best for them, then I must not faint here.

[CAN'T GO]

Even before I could unsheathe the [Unbreakable Faith], both of my arms were sealed off. Just as I was about to get helplessly dragged into the darkness of the vines, blinding rays of light split them apart.

It was a mini [Heaven Shaking Sword], visible under the faint sunlight. I raised my head to find the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] glaring at me.

"You bastard, what have you done?"

Fin.

"Just what the hell happened back there?"

Bihyung hung his head low after hearing Han Su-Yeong's words.

"You were busy talking a big game, but then, we got refused entry at the door… Oii, Dokkaebi, will you say something already?"

[Well, that is… Fuu…]

In the end, the couldn't go to the 'Final Scenario' and had to return to Earth. The reason? Their 'qualification is insufficient'.

[It seems that the Great Dokkaebis were behind this.]

"You think everything'll be fine after saying that? What will you do about our wasted time, dude?"

[…I'll compensate you with suitable rewards so please, stop grilling me.]

While the grumbling Bihyung was rummaging through his pockets, Han Su-Yeong sighed deeply and took a look at her companions.

They had somehow returned to Earth after going through all sorts of crazy ups and downs. Predictably, none of them were themselves at the moment.

"He might have died for real this time… I'm sorry, hyung… I… I wasn't qualified…

Because, I didn't do the contract…”

Yi Gil-Yeong had been muttering some indescribable things to himself while crouching over there, while Shin Yu-Seung had her eyes closed and both of her index fingers were pressed to her temples as if she was meditating or some such. Meanwhile, Yi Ji-Hye and Jeong Hui-Won had taken Yi Hyeon-Seong to Aileen at the [Industrial Complex]

and had vacated the premises for the time being.

“…This place hasn't changed at all. That ahjumma didn't even bother to clean the house, did she?"

Han Su-Yeong muttered to herself as she patted away the dust on the aged couch.

Once upon a time, she, Yu Sang-Ah, and Yi Su-Gyeong stayed together in this very house. A place where they lived together for three years during Kim Dok-Ja's absence…

Her brief reminiscence was cut short by the doorbell.

She utilised the [Black Flame] to remotely open the door and smirked to herself. "… I guess the 「Devil showing up when you talk about her」 could be a Fable as well."

"It's been a while, Su-Yeong-ah," said Yi Su-Gyeong as she scanned the messy state of the house. She eventually shook her head. "You're still the same as before. You should at least ventilate the place."

"I'll have you know, I've returned only just now. And it's already been so many yea…”

Han Su-Yeong flinched when she got that far. She might have spent dozens of years in the 'Isle of Reincarnators', but that was time spent within the island itself. She couldn't really tell exactly how long it had been on the outside.

Yi Su-Gyeong opened all the windows in the house with a simple flick of her hand and sent away all the stuffy dust outside. Her eyes remained fixed on the group sagging on the floor in the meantime.

Han Su-Yeong sneakily blocked the older woman's view towards them and coughed to clear her throat, before asking a question. "By any chance, did Jeong Hui-Won tell you already?"

"Tell me what?"

Han Su-Yeong lightly bit her lip. She wasn't sure how to explain this situation.

"Well, you can see that Kim Dok-Ja isn't here."

"Hmm, that's true. I learned of it just now, too."

She thought that maybe, she shouldn't have brought it up, but it was spilt milk already.

Han Su-Yeong squeezed her eyes shut and spoke. "The reason why he's not here, it's…

Me, Yu Jung-Hyeok and Jeong Hui-Won, we all wanted to save your son and tried to go with the soul's one big hit, but…"

"Please get to the main point."

"Ng. Actually, ahjumma, your son's gone to some place with someone. But that place is…"

"Are you perchance speaking of that?"

Han Su-Yeong followed Yi Su-Gyeong's pointing finger and turned her head. The TV

mounted on the wall was playing a news footage.

The scene on the screen showed a man wearing a white coat floating in the jet-black sky, with Kim Dok-Ja dangling off that man's arm.

- Breaking news! 's president kidnapped!

Han Su-Yeong's jaw dropped to the floor as she muttered softly. "… What the heck is that?"

For some unfathomable reason, the Earth's media had found out about that event. Yi Su-Gyeong and her rather relaxed expression stared at the screen for a little while, then she nodded her head. "That boy. He's still so popular."

"Ahjumma?! Don't you get that it's a pretty serious problem??"

"But, he looks like Yu Jung-Hyeok-gun. So, what can be a serious problem?" (TL note at the end)

"Because, that's not the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'. That's the problem."

Han Su-Yeong spat out a groan. But then, the TV's screen suddenly rewound itself back and the exact same footage played out again.

- Breaking news! 's president kidnapped!

She looked around wondering what was going on here, only to discover the stupefied Yu Jung-Hyeok continually poking the TV remote. He rewound the footage several

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times and repeated it over and over again.

Han Su-Yeong asked him. "… Hey, are you alright?"

"…”

"You won't regress even if your rewind that, you know? Did you even forget how to go back now?"

He didn't even pretend to hear her. His eyes burned scarily as if he wanted to engrave the appearance of the 'Secretive Plotter' in them. The Status of the Regressor who refused to accept his defeat oozed out from him and made the air in the living room rather stuffy and hot.

Han Su-Yeong spat out an even greater groan. "Dammit. Just who the heck distributed that footage…"

[Hum, hum.]

She turned her head yet again to find Bihyung this time, coughing to clear his throat.

"…You haven't left yet?"

[Here's your reward.]

Now that she thought about it, she had forgotten all about the reward payout. She extended her hand out, and the Dokkaebi's small hand placed 500 Coins on her palm.

"Are you messing with me??"

[Well, the thing is, the financial state of the Bureau's Seoul branch is a bit strained lately, you see… And what with all these many things that require our attention, it's like…]

Bihyung whistled while glancing at the other side of the sky.

The Seoul's sky that should've been clear was now dyed in the ominous colours of crimson and yellow. There were Probability's sparks lashing down like lightning bolts, as well as the pitch-black [Great Hole] swirling around viciously.

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Han Su-Yeong frowned deeply and asked. "Did something happen to Seoul?"

"The skies have been like that for a while now."

This city was no longer the location for the main scenario. But, if the apocalyptic phenomena were still persisting like that, it…

[It's because of the Apocalypse Dragon.]

Bihyung looked at the sky with a bitter expression, pulled out a lengthy smoking pipe from his inner pocket and mouthed it.

Perhaps she found that sight unacceptable, Han Su-Yeong snatched the pipe away and yelled at the Dokkaebi. "What are you talking about?! Why does the Apocalypse Dragon's effect reach this far?"

[You don't know? I thought Kim Dok-Ja would have told you already.]

"That idiot never tells us the most important information."

Bihyung pulled out a second smoking pipe looking rather unperturbed and spoke while lighting it up. [The revival of the Apocalypse Dragon is the first button of the great annihilation for all of us. You can think of it as the world-line now rushing towards its end with that thing wide awake… This was why I told you that we need to hurry to the 'Final Scenario'.]

“…What will happen if we don't get to the Final Scenario?"

[As the word implies, it's the apocalypse. You, me, this world.]

That composed declaration prompted the dumbfounded Han Su-Yeong to sharply shoot back. "What the heck, what is even… What's the point of this 'Final Scenario'

when the whole world is about to be destroyed? Why did you people even create such a scenario in the first place?!"

[The great annihilation is not a scenario planned out by the Dokkaebis. It's simply meant to be. And because the annihilation is real, the 'Final Scenario' has gained its purpose at last.]

Bihyung looked up at the distant skies with an expression of remorse. He saw the

movements of a group of stars, hurriedly trying to get to some place. Stars of the heavens were getting further away like shooting stars.

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[Oh-ooooooh!]

[Ah-aaaaaah!]

The 'Outer Gods' unleashed their jet-black Statuses, dyeing the entirety of the N'Gai's Forest in pure darkness.

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks managed to extract me from the vines and quickly stood all around me. The kkoma number [999] spoke up first. "Protect Kim Dok-Ja."

"I told all of you this before, didn't I? I knew he would cause a problem."

"Indeed, we should've killed him the first time we saw him."

Even though they spat out some seriously scary words, all of the mini Yu Jung-Hyeoks continued to hold their [Heaven Shaking Swords] firmly and didn't lower their guards.

They sliced and cut the approaching tentacles and advanced forward little by little.

Maybe because it was directly after witnessing something truly shocking, my entire body seemed to be wrapped in this cold air. The kkoma number [999] took off his black coat and placed it over my shoulders.

"I only remember telling you to read a book, so why did you have to provoke them?"

I wasn't sure what I could say back to him here. [999]'s eyes trembled.

“…You fool."

[Oh-oooooh!]

The howling Outer Gods' true voice reverberated heavily in the sky. Insects within the forest vomited out their bodily fluids and died, while some of the Gods even began fighting among themselves, too.

[999] spoke in a grave tone of voice. "These beings have not been understood for a

very long time. And you just had to get involved."

'Outer Gods' were flooding into where we were.

[GivetomeGivetomeGivetomeGivetome]

[KimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokja]

What was even more concerning, though, was the fact that not all Outer Gods carried the same sentiments as their peers. A few of the higher-ranked ones, after sensing my presence, began to exude unfiltered animosity in my way.

[Stin ki ng Cons tel ation has lo oked down on us.]

[Ki ll him get r id of h im.]

[No fo rgiving e ven if y ou are Plo tter's gue st.]

"Step aside, members of the Shantak!"

"We will cut you down if you come closer."

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks all unleashed their Statuses and resisted, but the 'Outer Gods' didn't back down at all. They approached closer one step at a time, and while emitting dizzying Statuses themselves, cried out in a loud roar.

[Oh, Pl otter! We can no lo nger wa it!]

[F or ho w long do we n eed to wa it? The wo rld-l ine's end is ap pro

aching!]

I knew very well what they were talking about.

The world-line's end.

Even these guys, as expected, were fully conscious of the 'Final Scenario'.

[Th is wo rld mu st unde rstand us]

"Step aside!!"

The tentacles closing in grew even more ferocious. Eventually, their Statuses became simply too much for the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks to deal with, but then…

The forest parted ways, and 'he' made his entrance.

He walked forward while crossing the tentacles that none of us could block. Each of his steps contained the solitude of indescribable eternity as well as the entirety of the 1863rd lives he had experienced.

Once upon a time, his name was Yu Jung-Hyeok, but now, he was the 'Secretive Plotter'.

A man who knew of every world-line's sorrow.

Outer Gods knelt down in front of that absolute, overwhelming nobleness.

[Oh, the gr eat Pl otter.]

However, not all of them did. There were some 'Gods' who didn't want to bend their opinions even when subjected to the intense pain of their existences turning into nothingness.

[Oh, the gr eat Pl otter, we can no lo nger wa it.]

The ones no one could ever understand were wailing in sorrow. They raged on, and they mourned. Even then, their rage and sorrow were not understood. They didn't belong to this this world-line, and they couldn't be understood through the existing

'Fables'.

One needed to work really hard to understand their rage, their sorrow and their grief.

[We wan t to be un ders tood.]

[We w ant to bec ome Fa bles.]

Stories that needed one to work hard to understand could never be Fables. Stories that needed one to throw oneself deeply in first couldn't be consumed.

The 'Secretive Plotter' opened his lips. [You will not be understood.]

He looked at each and every one of them with subtle gazes, studied them, and gifted them with the cruel reality.

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[That is because this has labelled all of you 'Terrors'. Because, this world has described you all as 'Chaos' that destroys the order, as calamities that could never be understood. That is why.]

It was then I finally understood why the 'Secretive Plotter' has chosen to side with these creatures.

「Why would a person who knows the end of everything repeat the same story over again?」

When I thought about it, the answer was a rather simple one.

「That's because he didn't like the end he witnessed.」

In the original story, Yu Jung-Hyeok and Constellations defeated the 'Outer Gods'

together. That's how he got to the end of the scenarios, and destroyed the .

[You will never shine in the sky like the Constellations, nor can you become the main actors of this world. As long as the exists, you will all remain forever as

'Outer Gods'.]

However, he didn't find what he wanted. And now, after becoming the 'Secretive Plotter', Yu Jung-Hyeok was stepping up to the battlefield once more.

[Soon, the war of annihilation will commence. The end of everything will soon begin, where stars will fall, worlds will collapse, and all Fables will be extinguished.]

I spotted the eyes of the 'Secretive Plotter' looking at me from afar. The [Eye of Sage]

spun around within his pitch-black iris.

[Oh, the great Plotter…!]

[Oh, oooooh!]

According to the plot of the original story, these creatures would meet with defeat.

「For the sake of the conclusion Kim Dok-Ja wishes for, these beings simply had to be defeated.」

would be destroyed, while the stars of the heavens and the solitary gods would die with no one to remember them. The defeated would

die extremely sorrowful deaths, while the victors would not get to bask in their victory.

I began walking towards the 'Secretive Plotter'.

“…Kim Dok-Ja?"

I heard [999] call out to me, but I didn't look back. I undid the [Miniaturisation], and my eye level changed rapidly. The black coat [999] placed on my shoulders wavered along with every step I took.

['s Probability is now shifting!]

[Stream of the great main scenario is now dwelling in you.]

Past the canopy of the vine-covered forest, the sea of stars of the could be seen. On one side of the sky, stars were emitting bright light, while on the other side, ominous-looking galaxies alongside the [Great Hole] were quietly flowing about.

Half of it, light, while the other half, darkness.

Soon, the final war would begin. And most likely, I would have to stand on one of the sides to witness the end of the world.

[Your second Modifier has been decided.]

A small star flickered on the far side of the sky. I stared at it for the longest time, before slowly reverting my gaze back to the ground. The 'Outer Gods' were now looking at me.

I returned their gazes and finally chose the side I'd stand.

[Your second Modifier is the 'Watcher of the Light and Darkness'.]

Fin.

(TL: The "-gun" bit at the end of a person's name isn't a literal gun. It's exactly the same thing as Japanese "kun", btw. Not many Koreans use it, though. At least not that I've seen.)

[Kill him.]

[KimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokja!]

I began walking towards the 'Outer Gods'.

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't try to stop me. It was as if he was telling me to try anything I want.

I took another step forward. The movements of the vines grew even more vicious.

They extended out in an instant, and grabbed both of my arms.

[HeknowsusHeknowsusHeknowsusHeknowsus]

"Right, I do know you."

I nodded my head towards them.

[ButhowButhowButhowButhowButhow]

'But how'.

I didn't know how to answer that question. When I failed to provide an answer, the animosity directed at me by the vines grew even heavier. Eventually, one of the tentacles wavering around flew in and pierced my shoulder. It hurt like crazy, but the true pain didn't come from the injured body part.

I could hear someone's voice coming from the end of that tentacle.

「"I don't want to die."」

Was it an illusion?

For a moment there, the tentacle piercing my shoulder looked like a sword.

…Not just any, but the Twin Dragon Sword. And I knew the owner of this sword well.

「"I don't want it to end like this."」

Yi Ji-Hye was crying. I belatedly reached out, but her crying face had disappeared by then. Her face slowly vanished, crumbling into debris and only the short, aimless voice fragments lingered on.

'The Nameless Ones'.

“…I know."

I suppressed the pain and spoke up. And then, yet another tentacle flew in towards me. The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] shouted out. As the bloody noise of my flesh being pierced resounded out, another voice entered my head.

「"Yu Jung-Hyeok-ssi, which number Yi Hyeon-Seong am I?"」

The Incarnation of steel, sturdier than anyone in this world. Just like before, Yi Hyeon-Seong's figure scattered like bubbles as I reached out. My hand wandered the empty air, and his voice came to me from beyond the void.

「"Truly, is there an end to these scenarios?"」

"Yes, there is."

I bit my lip and continued to walk forward.

One step, and then, another one.

Every time I did, fragments of the forgotten world-line talked to me.

「"I believed we could carry on for a little while longer."」

Yi Seol-Hwa, dying with her heart penetrated.

「"I don't resent you. Still, there is one thing I do regret…"」

Shin Yu-Seung, smiling faintly as she scattered away.

「"You're so dumb. Captain, I'm Kim Nam-Wun. You think I'll kick the bucket here? I won't die. I will definitely not die. I'll survive, and survive again to see the next scenario. For sure, the next scenario…"」

Kim Nam-Wun, passing on with his eyes still open.

Memories from the regression turns that I couldn't even begin to guess.

These were simply by-products of the failed world-lines, a collection of memories with no meaning to them anymore. The precious something that Yu Jung-Hyeok had been protecting even at the cost of becoming the 'Secretive Plotter'.

「"I ain't going to be your ally in the next turn. So, don't come looking for me."」

Gong Pil-Du.

「"Looks like you'll be left alone again, Yu Jung-Hyeok."」

Anna Croft.

「"It's been an honour to fight alongside you, Conquering King."」

Selena Kim.

Even the memories of those who used to be Constellations fleeted past me.

The Goryeo's number one swordsman, Cheok Jun-Gyeong.

The god of wine and ecstasy, Dionysus…

I stopped walking because of the sensation of the fierce flames from my right side. The tentacle holding onto my arm burned as it spoke to me.

「"I can still burn them some more."」

…Uriel.

I nodded my head and replied. "I know."

['Outer Gods' are now looking at you.]

I knew. But I couldn't understand.

Because, I wasn't them.

And that was why all I could say to them were these words.

"This story isn't over yet."

['Outer Gods' are paying attention to your words.]

"There are still some things left to be told, right?"

I looked up at the 'Outer Gods'.

These beings, portrayed always as either cephalopods or tentacled monsters.

Creatures cursed with the most disgusting appearances by the world-line, because they were not needed by it.

I spoke to them. "I'll tell your story."

Right away, the surroundings were swept up in the frenzied storm winds.

[Reallyreallyreallyreallyreally]

[WhatdoyoumeanWhatdoyoumeanWhatdoyoumean]

And from the other side, vicious animosity rained down on me.

[Lies!]

[Y ou th ink we wi ll fall for it the se cond ti me?]

Upper-grade Gods began emitting their auras at me.

I swallowed back the blood rising up in my throat and stared at them. I knew why they were reacting so violently like this. Because, they had been continually used by the

'scenario' until now.

[Do kkae bis sa id the sa me th ing.]

It was the 'Bureau' that learned of their existences first and had used them – the storytellers who, under the pretext of incorporating them into the scenarios, exploited their powers and Probability, and turned them into the 'Evil' of this world.

I spoke up with my true voice. [I'm not a Dokkaebi.]

[Y ou are a Con stell ation.]

[I'm not affiliated with the Bureau, nor am I a collaborator of Dokkaebis.]

[All Con stell ations are the sa me.]

Those words stabbed and dug into my chest like a dagger.

They were right. I was also just another Constellation who craved after Fables and leered on at their stories. However, because I was a Constellation, I got to know about something important, as well.

[You will all definitely be destroyed when the 'final war' commences. Doesn't matter how you fight, you will still end up losing.]

[How in sol ent, y ou ca n't tell th at wi thout fi ght ing fi rst…!]

[No need. I already know. I've already seen all the world-lines where you fight. I do not wish to see you die like that this time around.]

The branches of the 'Outer Gods' trembled from my words.

[What do y ou me an]

[You say that you wish to be understood. In that case, I'll make you into a Fable.]

Right at that moment, the surrounding space-time distorted. Tentacles were trembling ever so imperceptibly.

I sensed that vibration and continued on. [I'll ensure that you can stand on equal terms

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with the stars in the sky. What I'm saying is that, I'll create a Fable where no one will misunderstand you or despise you.]

The unrest slowly spread out. A large current of air swept across the 'N'Gai's Forest'

as if it was the sign of an incoming storm.

I didn't miss this opening and spoke again. [There is no reason for the 'final war' to start. There is no need for you to remain as 's evil…]

[Sh ut up]

[The lik es of y ou da res to!]

In the end, I did vomit out some blood. Upper-grade ostracised gods capable of destroying my body and killing my consciousness completely were descending down on me.

[KimdokjadangerKimdokjadanger]

[DontattackDontattackDontattack]

Vines wrapped tightly around me.

The 'Nameless Ones' were protecting me from the auras of the powerful upper-grade Outer Gods.

[Pa the tic ones that don t e ven po sse ss egos.]

Ku-gugugugu!

Just one true voice, and the dozens of branches were torn off. Even though they emitted painful screams, the smaller 'Outer Gods' protected me. And then, the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks stepped in front of me as well.

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't try to stop them or dissuade them. He simply watched on as if he was not allowed to interfere with the decision making process this time.

Just as the Statuses of the upper-grade Gods reached the critical point…

[You speak of some amusing things.]

Someone suddenly spoke up. A creature was walking out from a portal spinning around ominously.

[Oh, pitiful illegitimate children of the world-line, he speaks of the

truth.]

[And y ou, a re?]

[You shall become a Fable once more and be a part of the story within the stream of stars. That is, as long as that unfortunate Constellation is willing to sacrifice himself for your sakes.]

It was an old man with a very small stature, yet the shadow he cast was unimaginably large.

There were two lumps shaking about on the cheeks of the giant shadow.

[De vil of ho ri zon…]

I too knew of the race that old man belonged to. Indeed, I had a deal with one of them when I went to the Demon World for the first time.

However, this creature right before my eyes was on another dimension compared to the 'Wenny' I met back then.

There were countless Wennys in this world, but there could only be one with two lumps among them.

[Oh, the master of the ancient library.]

I raised my head to find the Wenny King staring at me with eyes filled with malicious interest.

[Are you truly planning to become the 's enemy for the sake of these discarded waste?]

*

I could see the circular-shaped exit open up in the distant forest. And behind me, many Outer Gods had come to see me off. Their tentacles danced side to side like a forest of gigantic reeds.

[KimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokja]

[GoodbyeGoodbyeGoodbye]

Most of them possessed similar outer appearances, but even then, I could just about tell them apart.

That guy over to the left side was the kind-hearted one possessing a tiny little bit of Shin Yu-Seung's memories from the 12th turn. The one on the far right, meanwhile, was blessed with a fair amount of 44th Kim Nam-Wun's… Hang on, didn't that guy stab me in the thigh earlier?

"There is no need to go this far," said the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] riding on my shoulder. "The deal with the Wenny King is as absolute as they come. If you do this, then you will definitely…"

"I won't die, so don't worry. By the way, are you planning to come with me?"

[999] formed an unhappy expression after hearing my question. "As per our agreement, I'm tasked with monitoring you. It'd become troublesome for us if you get in touch with the members of and come up with an underhanded scheme."

"But, I even did the existence pledge, saying that I won't contact them… Seriously, you Yu Jung-Hyeoks can be too much sometimes."

The first agreement I made with the Wenny King, as well as the Outer Gods, was that I'd not contact the nor reveal my identity to them.

And the second agreement was…

[Your actions have triggered a new scenario to be created in the !]

[Hidden scenario has been generated!]

I chuckled hollowly as I read the scenario messages.

Even things like this became a scenario… As expected of the , then. But then again, this world wanted to create a story out of its own destruction, so it shouldn't that surprising, really.

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Type: Hidden

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Introduce 'Outer Gods' to the 's main Great Fable.

However, they must not be introduced in the existing role of 'Outer Gods' as before.

Time limit: 100 days

Reward: Outer Gods' trust, ???

Failure: You will lose all of your memories and transform into an Outer God.

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Give Outer Gods a role that wasn't about being 'Outer Gods'…

Such a scenario didn't exist anywhere in the original story.

A scenario acquired after persuading the Outer Gods and making a deal with the Wenny King. If I failed it, then I'd be transformed into an Outer God like them.

This was the second condition of the agreement I made with the 'Wenny King'.

「However, succeeding in this scenario will ensure that Outer Gods wouldn't be destroyed.」

I looked at the exit of the N'Gai's Forest and did a light stretching exercise.

[999] asked me, perhaps finding me rather untrustworthy. "Where are you planning to go now? There shouldn't be any scenario with a 'Great

Fable' remaining by now."

He was right. Most of the Great Fables existing in had come to their conclusions by now. However, if my memory served me correctly, then one powerful

'Great Fable' should still remain.

I pretended to ask [999] in passing. "By the way, do you also know about the stories from the 1863rd turn?"

"I've heard about it from the Great Plotter."

"If you guys enter the 'final war' like this, then you'll definitely lose. And even if you somehow miraculously win, not many of you will end up surviving."

"Are you trying to curse us?"

"No, I'm only stating the truth."

No matter how powerful the faction of the 'Secretive Plotter' and the 'Outer Gods' was, they still couldn't fight against the entire . Whatever the case might have been, the current rulers of this universe were the 's Nebulas and the stinking 'Bureau'.

"The best way to avoid war is to inform the other side that they would lose a lot by starting one in the first place."

"What are you implying?"

"Do you know which Constellation slaughtered the most number of Outer Gods in the

'final war'?"

[999] carefully combed through his memories after hearing my

question and made his reply. Although, his expression indicated that his pride had been wounded just a little bit.

"No, I do not."

"The Status he possesses is so strong that normally, he has to divide himself into several pieces. Well, if I'm to describe him, he'd be pretty similar to the 'Secretive Plotter'."

“…Similar to the Great Plotter?"

"That's right. If only that guy didn't stand on the side of the , if only he didn't perform the suicidal attack on the tens of thousands of ostracised gods… the course of the 1863rd turn would've changed by a lot."

My words caused [999]'s eyes to tremble for the first time. It seemed that he had finally realised the identity of the Constellation I was talking about.

“…Could it be?"

The Constellation who sacrificed himself to take out countless other gods during the

'Ways of Survival's final war.

There was only one being capable of doing that. I grinned and spoke. "You're right.

We're going to go where he is and make him our ally."

Fin.

A white figure of a person rose up in the pitch-black darkness.

Yu Jung-Hyeok swung his sword several times at this figure. From the Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword, even to the Shooting Star Slash. However, not one of his sword skills managed to even touch the enemy's shadow.

Right after that, Fables collided. Jolted awake now, he opened his eyes while gasping out a pained moan.

He was sitting inside the darkened training dojo, the sun having set already. A lengthy shadow was looking down on him.

It was the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

"Was he really strong?"

His master bent her back to settle down, her eyes filled with concern towards her disciple. Yu Jung-Hyeok bit his lip and replied. "… He was."

"By how much?"

"Even after unlocking the Transcendence level 5, I couldn't win against him."

The fifth level of Transcendence was the absolute limit that the current Yu Jung-Hyeok had reached.

The Breaking the Sky Saint quietly observed him for a little while, before opening her lips. "When you break past the Transcendence's sixth level, you'll no longer be bound by the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship]'s gender requirements."

Originally, the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] was a martial technique designed for women. But, as was the case with every martial technique out there, once one stepped past a certain level, they would reach the stage of 'Breaking Beyond

Boundaries'.

The process of endlessly exceeding many boundaries was the part of a Transcender's training regime.

"There is no guarantee of defeating him even if I reach the sixth level."

"Why do you think that?"

"He is me."

For the first time ever, Yu Jung-Hyeok's always-confident voice contained a faint trace of fear. "That man, he's none other than me who has regressed over 1863rd times.

How can I defeat someone like that?"

It was a clear sign of despair.

The moment he stood face to face with the 'Secretive Plotter', he witnessed a wall he couldn't overcome no matter what he tried. There was the gap of time between them that could never be bridged by the mere 3rd turn regression. His enemy had already surpassed that lengthy period of time to enter this world-line.

The Sword Saint spoke. "He is not you."

“…He is also Yu Jung-Hyeok."

"He has not tread on the same path as you have. And he'll not do so in the future, either."

As if she wanted to wipe away the despair rooted in her disciple's eyes, her large hand gently stroked his cheek.

She spoke again. "It's not the level of Transcendence you have reached, but which Fables you have acquired that's the most important part. You may be only a little chick who has regressed three times, but you know of Fables that he doesn't."

Yu Jung-Hyeok heard those words and looked down at his fist. It was a fist that failed to reach the 'Secretive Plotter'. He slowly unfurled his hand and Fables leaked out from there.

Fables that he had acquired himself. Fables that the 'Secretive Plotter' didn't know.

And…

"The path of Transcendence is different for everyone. So, do not try to chase after him, and search for the path only you can tread."

He wordlessly clenched his fist tightly. As if he didn't want to permit any of the Fables to leave him.

“…Have you heard any new information, Master?"

The Breaking the Sky Saint shook her head.

It had been over a week since Kim Dok-Ja's disappearance.

Unfortunately, neither his whereabouts nor the location of the 'Secretive Plotter' had been discovered until now.

"You say that he crossed over from another world-line."

"That's correct."

"I do not know what his aim is, but if he bothered to enter this world-

line at this point in time, then it's possible that his goal is somehow related to the 'Final Scenario'."

Yu Jung-Hyeok agreed with her opinion. In other words, there was a good chance that he'd encounter the 'Secretive Plotter' again by going to the location of the Final Scenario.

"However, the current situation is that the can't enter the

'Final Scenario'."

He nodded his head.

- Fables you have acquired are insufficient to approve your participation in the 'Final Scenario'.

On that day they failed to enter the 'Final Scenario', the one-sidedly sent that communique in their direction. However, he thought that made some sense.

Because, not only were they a newly-created Nebula, the number of Fables they

managed to acquire was also rather small, as well.

However, one couldn't strictly argue that when taking into consideration the grade of the Fables they had acquired. Especially so with the 「Season of Light and Darkness」, the Great Fable they earned the last time that would be extremely hard to find its equal anywhere in the .

- Where is the representative of your Nebula?

In the end, everything boiled down to Kim Dok-Ja's absence.

After the person possessing the highest percentage of the Nebula's Fable shares left the group, the aggregate amount of Fables for the

whole Nebula had become simply too inadequate.

It was unknown what Yu Jung-Hyeok was thinking to himself as he maintained his silence. And how long went by like that? He slowly raised himself up off the floor, sheathed the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and although still unsteady on his feet, got ready to leave.

"Where are you planning to go?"

"I'm leaving to acquire a new Great Fable, Master."

He needed to acquire the qualification to get to the 'Final Scenario' even without Kim Dok-Ja's shares. was neither that fool's private army nor his underlings. This group needed to be able to protect themselves without him around, and even if they end up losing him somehow…

…They needed to be capable enough to clear the 'Final Scenario'.

[Ba-aht…]

Biyu murmured in despondency from somewhere in the empty air. Yu Jung-Hyeok silently stared at her for a little while, before activating the [Eye of Sage] to sift through the information he possessed in his head.

There weren't that many locations left at this point in time where he could acquire a

'Great Fable'. When flipping that statement around, it also meant that the remaining Fables would be that much more powerful than others.

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He had already acquired one powerful Great Fable called the 「Season of Light and Darkness」. If he managed to earn 'that Fable' on top of this, then it might be possible to fight against the 'Secretive Plotter' once more.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint watched Yu Jung-Hyeok walk away

and asked him.

"Are you planning to go alone?"

"I've always been alone, Master."

"But, that path is the one already tread by the other party."

His Master's words caused Yu Jung-Hyeok's figure to flinch.

In the next moment, a voice came out from beyond the walls of the training hall.

"Hey Yu Jung-Hyeok, where are you?? We gotta get going, now!"

With the blinding light behind them, the members of opened the door and rushed inside the dojo.

Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Gil-Yeong, Yi Ji-Hye, and Han Su-Yeong…

It was unknown since when they got ready to leave, but regardless, everyone from the Nebula was here.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint spoke again. "They are precisely your Fable now, Jung-Hyeok-ah."

Something that the 'Secretive Plotter' did not possess.

Yu Jung-Hyeok dazedly looked back at his Master, and she addressed him again.

"You don't have to fight alone in this regression turn."

*

The location of the new 'Great Fable' was four days away. It would've been so much quicker to get there by borrowing the powers of the Dokkaebis, but the current situation didn't permit that.

- You cannot borrow the powers of Dokkaebis you are friendly with.

- You must never reveal the truth that you're 'Kim Dok-Ja'.

All thanks to the stinking agreement I had with the 'Wenny King'.

Because of it, I couldn't enter Biyu's channel or send word of my wellbeing to the .

In the end, I had no choice but to personally drive the [X-grade Ferrarghini] I purchased from the 'Mass Production-type Maker' to the destination.

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] polishing his [Heaven Shaking Sword] atop my shoulder grumbled softly. "Your driving sucks."

"Then, why don't you drive? By the way, you're not planning to stick to that appearance now, are you?"

Without a doubt, we'd run into Constellations that will recognise us once we entered the scenario location. The existence of the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok was just too eye-catching.

Well, Yu Jung-Hyeok himself was just too famous by now, so…

"Indeed, I am too inconspicuous like this."

[999] seemed to be pondering something. His body suddenly jolted a bit, before a

'Pow!' noise resounded out and he transformed into a Murim dumpling.

I was shocked silly by this event. But [999] sounded utterly disinterested as he addressed me.

- This should be fine.

“…Hey, you. Carrying a dumpling around on my shoulder will be even more eye-catching, you know?"

- Why don't you change your pathetic appearance as well?

Just as the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't maintain his original appearance, I too

needed to make sure that my identity as 'Kim Dok-Ja' wasn't discovered.

The now-dumpling-fied Yu Jung-Hyeok roughly rubbed the dumpling skin all over my face as if he was trying to paint a wall. I sensed the Fable on my face change as creaking noises resounded out. How long passed by like that?

By the time I opened my eyes, I ended up freaking out by what I saw.

[999] spoke to me as I stared dumbfoundedly at the mirror, my eyes blinking non-stop.

- It's done.

Holy moly. This might not be enough to slap Yu Jung-Hyeok's cheek silly, but still… It should be enough to make me ponder whether I should slap him or not, at least. (TL

note at the end)

I rubbed my new statuesque face and muttered to myself. "… Can't I keep this face forever?"

- If you do, you'll be struck by the storm of Probability's aftermath.

As if he had touched something dirty, [999] diligently patted down his dumpling body.

Completely disregarding whether he was doing that or not, I continued to stare at the mirror.

A long time ago, I absorbed the Fable fragment of the 'Casanova Who Died During Sexual Acts' and became pretty good looking for a while, but this was on another scale compared to that.

I spoke in an admiring tone of voice. "It's true that the 999th regression turn is amazing. The 3rd turn doesn't have skills like this

one, you know."

-… 3rd turn?

"Oh, you didn't know? Yu Jung-Hyeok in this place is the 3rd turn. And this is the 3rd turn world-line, too."

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] stared deeply at me for a while after hearing those words, and asked me a question.

- Why do you think that?"

"What do you mean why…?"

I was about to reply with "Because, the 'Ways of Survival' starts off with the 3rd turn, that's why" but stopped. I decided to refine my answer just a bit.

“…Because, the beginning was the 3rd turn, that's why."

- But, why does it start from the 3rd turn? Don't know how numbers work? The beginning is the 0th turn.

He was right.

The first chapter of the 'Ways of Survival' started off from Yu Jung-Hyeok's third turn, but if you get technical about it, then you could say that the story began with his 0th turn.

I felt a bit weirded out after thinking like that.

…Why did I come to Yu Jung-Hyeok's 'third turn', anyway?

I wasn't going to follow the 3rd turn's story as it was in the original, so there wouldn't have been a reason for me to start in this particular turn even if that's where the novel began.

…I don't know. It's not as if I can figure this out right now, anyway.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok in this world-line said that he was the 'third turn'. So, this place is the third regression turn."

And the information I confirmed through the [Character List] said so, too.

But then, [999] spoke in a mocking tone.

- Trusting such information at its face value. How naï ve.

"What?"

- Never mind. We've seemed to have arrived.

Along with the blinding light, the lengthy dimension tunnel finally came to an end.

What appeared next was a giant Gate leading to the new scenario's location.

I spotted a group of beings waiting to enter in front of the Gate. I collected the [X-grade Ferrarghini] and joined the group.

A Constellation was manning the entrance to the scenario location, rather than the usual Dokkaebis. But that made sense, since the host for this 'Great Fable' scenario was a Nebula.

Although it was one of the largest Nebulas out there, it had almost no point of contact with me until now.

[Next.]

It was a Constellation holding a massive three-pronged spear on one hand, while wearing a combination of aged crimson crown and armour set.

The domineering Status exuding from his entire body attested to the

fact that he was a Fable-grade Constellation possessing a pretty hefty Status.

The Guardian of Buddhist Laws, Virudhaka. (TL: In Korean and Hanja – 증장천왕/增

長天王)

He was one of the Four Heavenly Kings that protected the entrance of the , the headquarters of the Nebula .

[Next.]

Not too long afterwards, my turn came around.

Virudhaka glared at my face intently as if he wanted to discover anything suspicious on it and eventually, threw out his first question.

[Your purpose for visiting?]

[I came to participate in the Great Fable.]

[Your Modifier.]

Obviously, I couldn't use the 'Demon King of Salvation' here. Fortunately, I did have a brand new Modifier I received not too long ago.

[It's the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness'.]

Fin.

(TL: "slapping XX's cheek" is not a literal act of physical violence, but simply a popular saying in Korea that implies "you're so pretty that it puts the other party to shame".)

My words caused a handful of Constellations standing behind me to murmur among themselves.

I wondered if others had heard of my new Modifier already, but fortunately, that didn't seem to be the case.

[I'm sure the Bureau's naming division was behind that title? Do they still do that nowadays?]

[I thought there wouldn't be any other Modifiers that could exceed the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', but…]

[Tsk, why do young ones these days prefer such Modifiers anyway?]

…Well, I guess I can tell what they are complaining about, then.

Virudhaka completed the simple entry procedure and then, stared at my shoulder.

[What is that dumpling?]

[It's my lunch.]

[…How peculiar. A fool showed up with cotton candy yesterday, and now we have you.]

Cotton candy?

[Next.]

Much to my relief, Virudhaka let me through without much hassle.

[You have entered the channel that directs the scenario's location.]

Right after I went past the Gate, I was greeted by the rainbow-coloured aura swirling

around, followed by the guide message as well as an accompanying video.

[We welcome you to the world of the Nebula !]

…Yeah, even the entry video was on another scale.

When I blinked, I found myself standing atop a white cloud.

It was flying at a fairly decent knock with me as its sole passenger. I looked around and found a handsome golden-coloured monkey flying alongside side me.

「"Let's go, friend."」

The monkey winked at me playfully and performed a somersault in the air while swinging his Ruyi Bang around. The image in the sky changed and now showed countless Yogoe creatures rushing towards us. (TL note at the end) I knew this was all fake but still, couldn't help but get absorbed by it.

[The world's most beautiful epic.]

Because, well, this was the most famous Great Fable that the Nebula

possessed, that was why.

The scene now showed the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal Sun Wukong fighting against all those Yogoe creatures. And right behind him, a great army of thousands following in his footsteps.

[We invite you to experience this grand adventure.]

The footage came to an end, and I found myself standing on a plaza before I even noticed it.

The dumpling on my shoulder spoke up.

- What a showy salesmanship that was.

"Stop yapping. You're supposed to be a dumpling, remember?"

I complained for no reason from the embarrassment I felt after getting all worked up

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a bit just now. I then slowly took in the surrounding sights and observed the panoramic view of the .

The plaza was filled with elegant ancient palaces. The vestige of civilisation gleamed brilliantly in the golden hue. Stars among stars had gathered here, and the world created by Fables acquired by those stars was now laid out before my eyes.

I had been to the bases of other Nebulas before, but this would be my first time in a worldview with this many people in it.

For the time being, I decided to investigate my surroundings a bit more.

It was around then that I saw a hologram appearing on one of the electronic boards installed in the plaza.

- Whereabouts of Nebula 's members unknown!

- They are understood to be participating in a new Great Fable scenario…

['The 4th Wall' is strongly activating!]

- What is the next destination of ?

It was playing the scene of Yu Jung-Hyeok and my companions entering a Gate emitting blinding light. I stopped walking for a little while and watched them disappear through that light.

['The 4th Wall' is activating even stronger than before!]

…Brand new 'Great Fable', was it?

I could more or less guess what happened there.

My companions must be wandering around here and there, searching for a way to acquire a new Great Fable. Well, after I left the , their share of Fables wouldn't have been sufficient enough to let them into the 'Final Scenario'.

I shifted my head to find [999] looking straight at me.

- I advise you not to make any unwise decisions.

"…I know already. Don't you worry."

Sure, I desperately wanted to return to my companions right away, but right now, my situation didn't allow me to contact any one of them.

- It's not for you, but for the sake of your comrades.

"I know."

Even if I forget about the agreement for a second here, the road I'm about to tread was lined with dangerous thorns with no guarantee of walking away alive. If I carelessly contacted them, every one of my companions might fall into life-threatening danger.

[Will you travel to the Great Fable scenario location?]

I nodded my head.

[Automatic guidance to the scenario progress location will now commence.]

As expected of a Nebula that pursued convenience above all else – my

legs actually began running all by themselves.

I noticed a few Incarnations around me who also started their automatic running thing, sporting the same body posture as me. We all became rather embarrassed and avoided meeting each other's gazes.

[Automatic guide will now end.]

The place I arrived at was in front of a giant holographic panel installed to the west of the plaza.

There were many Constellations and Incarnations present here already. I could see golden-coloured bronze statues rising up above right next to the sea of crowds.

The one taking the centre-most spot was a Constellation that I knew pretty well. The

'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', sporting a head full of golden hair and wielding a gigantic Ruyi Jingu Bang.

These were the statues of protagonists of the Journey to the West, including the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal Sun Wukong.

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Not surprisingly, seemed to be well aware of which story out of their worldview was the most famous of them all.

[New main scenario is available!]

And the upcoming scenario was related to that 'famous story'.

I accessed the scenario window.

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Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Work together with other Constellations and/or Incarnations to create 'Fable chamber' and remake the Journey to the West. The remade Journey will be evaluated in real-time by judges as well as audience members. Through the judging criteria which may include 'Popularity', 'Degree of Faithfulness to the original', and

'Originality', overall points will be assigned at the end. The Fable that manages to acquire the highest number of votes will be judged the winner of the scenario.

Time Limit: -

Reward: Great Fable related to the 'Journey to the West', goodwill from the Nebula

, 3,000,000 Coins, ???

Failure: -

* The copyright to the reconstituted Fables will be shared between the Nebula

and the participants.

* Depending on the judges' votes, you may acquire either a 'legendary' or 'historical'

grade Fable.

* A participant may only take on one role. (Excluding extras)

* Additional Coins will be rewarded according to the rankings.

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Indeed, 's scale was on another realm altogether.

Putting up a scenario where you were supposed to dramatise their Great Fable…

If this explanation was correct, then even if one failed to clear the scenario, simply participating in it would let you acquire either a legendary or historical grade Fable.

Strangely, though, the kkoma dumpling Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke in a confused voice as if he couldn't understand something.

- Remake the Journey to the West??

“…Ah. You didn't come here during your turn, did you? But, the turns before yours should've come here before."

- It's not as if I retain all the memories of my past regressions.

"Well, it's as the explanation says. If I were to summarise it, then the participants are supposed to pick a role from the Journey to the West and act out the story itself."

- In that case, wouldn't everyone try to pick the role with the most importance?

"You're right. That's why we have that thing called the 'Fable chambers'."

- Fable chambers?

Rather than a verbal answer, I simply pointed to the advertisement boards the Constellations had put up here and there.

[Looking for anyone willing to open a Fable chamber with us!]

[All the roles are still available, with the exception of Sun Wukong, Tang Sanzang, Sha Wujing, or Zhu Bajie! We even have a scenario writer ready! Let us create a truly enjoyable Fable together!]

The Fable chamber. Every participant was forced to create one before being allowed to enter the scenario.

- I see. You're supposed to form a team like that and compete against one another.

"That's right. Only by doing so will you ensure the diversity of the Fable, you see."

- Diversity?

"In the end, the real goal of this event is to enhance the impact of 'Journey to the West'.

By increasing the number of varied and entertaining versions of the 'Journey' in circulation, the strength of the original will grow even greater, and that would, in turn, serve to advertise the position of , too."

- You're surprisingly smarter than you look. I thought you were a fool.

I grinned sheepishly.

To be honest, what I uttered just now was nothing more than me quoting what Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1287th turn had said.

That's when we got to hear the complaints coming from ancient-looking Constellations.

[I simply can't fathom what is thinking lately. Is this what they mean by the water in the rear of the Yangtze washing away those in the front? Huh…]

[Even if they are trying to go along with the changing times… Isn't this tantamount to insulting the original work?]

It kind of made sense for the ancient Constellations to think like that. But, what could anyone do about the ever-changing taste of the times?

In all honesty, most of the Constellations had already adopted to the already-changed times, anyway.

[Currently, 5412 'chambers' are remaking the Journey to the West.]

…There were already 5412 of them??

Only then did it really hit home that an incredible number of Constellations and Incarnations had rushed over to this particular 'Great Fable'. But then again, many Constellations must've been feeling the heat after the Final Scenario had opened up.

The Great Fable related to the 'Journey to the West' could very well prove to be their

golden ticket, after all.

"So, the problem here is that I can't enter the scenario alone…"

Meaning, I'd have to create 'Fable chamber' like other Constellations and join the scenario. I took a look around my vicinity and spotted an occasional few that had newly opened up their chambers and were recruiting members to fill their quotas.

[Recruiting a Constellation willing to play the 'Hong Hai Er' (The Red Boy). An Incarnation of a Fable-grade Constellation is also OK.]

[Recruiting the 'Golden Horned King'. Accepting only Historical-grade or higher.]

Those indicated that the casting for the main characters had been filled already.

As I expected, chambers recruiting villains far outnumbered those looking for the main characters. It was all because of the distribution of the Great Fable's shares when they did acquire it later.

Well, you'd get a greater share by playing a main character, rather than a villain, so it couldn't really be helped.

[Recruiting the actor for the 'Yellow Robe Demon'. Coin split is 7 to 3. No Fable shares.

We don't care about your Status.]

By the way, it might be just my gut talking here, but this…

[Recruiting an extra for multiple roles. We don't judge your Status. No Fable shares.

Every appearance is a guaranteed 1000 Coins.]

[Oiii, hyung-ssi over there! Come this side! We'll treat you right!]

…I looked everywhere, but it felt as if there were only con men around this place.

I was hoping against hoping, but well, I failed to spot any familiar Constellations, either. Maybe that was an obvious result, seeing that famous Constellations would've already joined Fable chambers by now…

For the time being, I approached the panel and decided to look at the list of 'Fable chambers' first.

The list was automatically organised by the rankings. Surprisingly, the highest-ranked chamber belonged to someone even I knew of.

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[The Real Journey to the West]

- Current number of votes: 8651

- Introduction: The previously-unknown secrets of the authentic Journey to the West will be revealed.

- There are no more open spots available.

- [Cider], [Regression], [System]… (TL note at the end)

- Current ranking: First

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If my memory served me correctly, then this Fable chamber should belong to the Nebula 's 'Fei Hu'.

Out of many regression turns, this Fei Hu's Fable was always picked as the winning one for the current 'Great Fable' scenario. It was to such an extent that even before the competition was over, the saying "Victory already belongs to Fei Hu anyway" routinely made rounds…

- Hurry up and decide already.

"Just hold on."

I might look like this, but this great I possessed over ten years' worth of experience as the reader of genre novels.

Just by looking at the titles, I… No, well, I only had to read the introductions to easily figure out what kind of Fables we might get here.

I reorganised the list by 'Newest' and began scrolling through the Fable chambers.

"Right now, it's a bit of a trend to change the protagonist."

- Change the protagonist? How?

"For instance, the majority of people think that the MC of the Journey to the West is Sun Wukong, right? But when you actually get down to it… Ohh, it really appeared."

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[I've reincarnated as the last disciple in the Journey to the West?!]

- Current number of votes: 3313

- Introduction: Just for how long will Sun Wukong remain as the hero? It's time for Pigsy to show his stuff!

- Recruiting extras at all times.

- [Reincarnation], [Possession], [Healing]…

- Current ranking: Eighth

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- It's already underway.

"Dammit."

I scrolled down once more. Not too long afterwards, I discovered a couple more excellent-sounding chambers.

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[Disciples that I managed to rear]

- Current number of votes: 3310

- Introduction: Here comes Tang Sanzang, after training the strongest disciples!

- [Possession], [Rearing], [Healing]…

- Current ranking: Ninth

[The Journey's Extra] (TL: LOL)

- Current number of votes: 3221

- Introduction: I've somehow ended up inside the Journey to the West.

But I… seemed to have become Tang Sanzang's horse.

- [Extra], [System], [Animal]…

- Current ranking: Eleventh

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…Dammit, all the Fable chambers with potential for great popularity were already full.

- You've been dilly-dallying too long and now, it seems you're already done for.

I didn't want to acknowledge it, but he might be right on this one.

Many high-ranked chambers had finished casting their main characters and not only that, their Fables were already well underway, making a bit hard for me to butt in now.

I couldn't help but wonder whether I should just apply to become an extra or not, but then, I'd not be able to acquire what I want through a role with such little importance.

[The 4th Fable chamber list will close soon!]

[After closing, it'll become impossible to register additional roles with the exception of extras!]

It was literally one thing after another. Now, the chamber closing time was approaching, too. I had to make a decision here.

How long passed by like that?

Out of all the classifieds that I scrolled through in a hurry, I ended up spotting something rather suspicious.

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- (Urgently recruiting) Searching for a Sun Wukong who will ride on

the bus. All the other roles have been cast already. Just show up and you're hired.

…Still recruiting Sun Wukong, was it?

Hang on. Not just any other role, but the 'Sun Wukong'?

[I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Son Wukong!!]

Haven't I seen that many 'S' letters somewhere before?

Even though I knew I was being taken for a ride here, I still tapped on the info tab of this chamber.

And that's when I saw its introduction.

- Introduction: Only I know the end of the Journey to the West. (TL: Double LOL)

Fin.

(TL: A Yogoe is basically the Korean version of the Japanese Yokai. I left as is, as it's not exactly a monster nor a demon, with no direct English alternative. A quick googling might get you the result of 'goblin', but most will associate that with a stinky little green creature, which a Yogoe definitely isn't.) (TL: Just in case you don't know what 'Cider' as a [story tag] means, it's got nothing to do with the transparent semi-alcoholic beverage, but simply a Korean slang word for

'That refreshing feeling'.)

Only I know the end of the Journey to the West?

Where have I heard of that introduction before?

I decided to enter and confirm the situation of this chamber first.

['Player 8' -nim has entered the 6731st Fable chamber's waiting area.]

Thankfully, it seemed that their Fable hadn't started yet. But then again, they shouldn't be able to start without the role for Sun Wukong filled up, so there was that, too.

After I entered the chamber, the surroundings changed and a large round desk suddenly materialised.

Square chat windows were floating above the desk's chairs, rather than actual people.

They signified the participants playing the other roles.

[Player 1 has currently selected the role of 'Zhu Bajie'.]

[Player 2 has currently selected the role of 'Sha Wujing'.]

[Player 6 has currently selected the role of 'Tang Sanzang's White Horse'.]

The faces of the players were all obscured by question marks. It seemed that this was done in order to protect the personal information of the actual players.

Okay, but never mind that for now… There were so many players here, yet no one had selected the role of 'Sun Wukong' yet?

- Player 8: Hello, everyone.

Maybe they had all logged off or something, because no one bothered to write a message in the chat room even after I made an appearance. But then…

- Scenario Master: ㅎㅇ?

- Scenario Master: Which role you wanna?

I quickly inputted my reply in the chatroom in the middle.

- Player 8: Is the role for Sun Wukong still vacant?

- Scenario Master: ㅇ vacant.

- Player 8: That's so strange.

- Scenario Master: Had someone we want, but got delayed… Wanna do Sun Wukong?

This guy, he seems to have a habit of not typing proper sentences.

Just as I was getting worried about if it'd be okay to have someone like this guy as the scenario's master, a message popped up with a suspiciously good timing as if its sender had read my mind.

- Scenario Master: me know that genre inside out. No worries 'bout scenario 'qual'.

Yup, it was just so hard to trust anyone with that type of grammar. Still, I decided to test a couple of things out anyway.

- Player 8: I'd like ask you about the chamber's title. That [I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong].

- Scenario Master: ㅇ me responsible.

- Player 8: Why are there five 'S' letters?

- Scenario Master: need that many to attract aggro.

…Hmm, maybe he does know something after all?

It got on my nerves a bit that he didn't bother to use any polite speech, though.

I continued on with my questioning.

- Player 8: Sun Wukong really is the protagonist, yes?

- Scenario Master: ㅇㅇ yup

- Player 8: Wouldn't the audience feel fed up with leaving the original work's MC as is?

I thought it was a trend for the side characters or extras to become protagonist lately.

I thought I had accurately picked on his weak spot, but the master's response was surprisingly calm.

- Scenario Master: Oh, looks like you did some market research.

- Player 8: It was a mere simple browse-through.

- Scenario Master: True about nim's words regarding extra-turned-hero stories doing good business. But, Sun Wukong has to be MC if we wanna be numero uno. Think from POV of a judge.

- Player 8: Hmm…

- Scenario Master: important bit not who's MC and whatnot, but how much 'unfamiliar character' he is. And too many extra-turned-hero stories out there.

…Would you look at this guy?

At a glance, he might seem to be yapping on whatever came up into his mind, but well, what he said just now was not wrong.

More often than not, the ones to take the top spot at times like this would be stories featuring the traditional heroes.

For instance, Fei Hu's [The Real Journey to the West] featured Sun Wukong as its main protagonist.

- Player 8: Is that why you went with 'retired Sun Wukong'?

- Scenario Master: ㅇㅇ

- Player 8: What will the retired Sun Wukong be doing?

- Scenario Master: nothing.

- Player 8:??

- Scenario Master: ah, it's a spoiler so no talking. So, you in or not?

I was in a dilemma.

- Scenario Master: If you're not, hurry and leave. We don't have much time. No answer in next 5 sec, and I eject you.

I was kind of curious about how would a retired Sun Wukong work as a protagonist, too…

[The 4th Fable chamber list will close in five minutes!]

I'd be cutting it too fine if I were to search for another chamber now.

Dammit, I don't have a choice here.

Regardless of what kind of scenario it was, as long as I do my best, it'd be fine, right?

- Player 8: I'm in.

- Scenario Master: Hmm. Then my turn to ask questions.

- Player 8: Regarding?

[Scenario Master wishes to confirm your details.]

[Please select the information you wish to reveal.]

He wants to view my information?

- Player 8: Is it really necessary?

- Scenario Master: Just wanna know your name.

…My name, was it?

I decided to reveal some of my info.

[Player 8-nim is a 'Constellation'.]

[Player 8-nim's Modifier is the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness'.]

[The applicable information is made available only to the 'Scenario Master'.]

The Scenario Master didn't respond for a while.

Heh, he must've been shocked by what he saw.

- Scenario Master: Ehng? You were a Constellation-nim? But, why here in a low-rent chamber?

I replied quickly.

- Player 8: I may come across that way, but I know how to fight a bit. I dearly wish to become the retired Sun Wukong!

- Scenario Master: Something smells fishy, tho?

- Player 8: The real fun is in raising an unpopular Fable from ground-up, wouldn't you agree?

- Scenario Master: BTW, what's up with the dumpling?

…Dumpling?

[You're currently accompanied by your pet 'Murim dumpling'.]

Dammit, I forgot that this guy was here with me.

- Scenario Master: But, we ain't got no roles for pets, tho?

- Player 8: It's just a dumpling. It's not even strictly a pet per se.

- Scenario Master: Hmm, it's a bit awkward, innit. Your opinions, pls?

Surprisingly enough, the Scenario Master actually went and asked for the opinions of

other players.

[Player 1-nim says that 'It's fine if it's a Murim dumpling'.]

[Player 4-nim says that 'Master should do whatever takes their fancy'.]

[Player 3-nim says that 'I want to play this game right now'.]

Thankfully, other players didn't object.

-Scenario Master: ㅇㅋ we doing it so might as well ask for Murim-type ppl

- Player 8: Thank you.

- Scenario Master: ㄱㄱ

A short while later, the countdown began.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1…

[Fable chamber, 'I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong' has begun its storytelling!]

[This Fable chamber's plot will follow the one set out by the Scenario Master.]

[The main plotline of the Fable Chamber can be interfered with by the judges or the audience.]

['The Journey to the West Remake' will commence!]

Bright light dyed my vision ash-grey next.

((I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong((

Letters appeared in a stylish manner from the darkness.

And so, I had become this story's main character, 'Sun Wukong', and would participate in this play from now on. Honestly speaking, my heart was palpitating just a bit.

To think, I'd really become the protagonist of an actual story…

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「Kim Dok Ja cou nting chi kens alr eady.」

Along with [The 4th Wall]'s voice entering my head, messages floated up before my eyes.

[Prologue is starting.]

[Prologue will be told through a flashback sequence.]

[During the applicable section, players can only speak the assigned dialogue.]

[Scenario Master's narration is now commencing.]

Finally, a voice came from beyond the darkness next.

(At the end of the lengthy travel alongside Sanzang's company, Sun Wukong had eventually arrived in the Western Regions and succeeded in obtaining the sacred Buddhist texts.)

Oh, so it's begun.

The scene actually changed as well, and before I even realised it, my body had morphed to that of Sun Wukong's. Folks that could be my companions were around me, but maybe because this was a flashback sequence, their faces were blurred out.

And my lips began moving all on their own.

"Finally, retirement, is it… It sure was a long itinerary."

At the same time, Sun Wukong's memories fleeted past my eyes.

Getting chased away by Tang Sanzang, getting stabbed in the back by Zhu Bajie, and even abandoned by Sha Wujing. Memories of dragging around a ragtag bunch of utterly useless morons as his companions, fighting against countless Yogoe creatures until I became a bloody mess…

Now that I saw those things, it did seem somewhat saddening and bitter. So, this was how the Journey to the West looked like from Sun Wukong's perspective, then.

But it was then when I heard a strange voice.

[Are you planning to end it like this?]

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I looked down to find the scared texts suddenly talking to me.

[Are you really satisfied by this sort of a story?]

I was somewhat impressed by this. So, our story's plot would start in this manner, now was it?

Words continued to rise above the sacred Buddhist texts.

[Do you not resent the unfairness of it? You've experienced expulsion by Sanzang because of illogical reasons and had to suffer oppression many times over.]

[Was that all? You've been tortured by the Constrictive Headband because of crimes you were not guilty of.]

[Nothing more than the reason of walking on the path of Buddhism, you had to protect Tang Sanzang and stick to a gruelling itinerary, even though you'd have arrived in your destination in the blink of an eye by riding on your Somersault Cloud.]

For sure, the Journey to the West did have cruel aspects when it came to treating Sun Wukong.

[And the result of such an arduous journey is for you to ascend to 'Paradise'? Are you not truly incensed by this conclusion?]

Now that I heard it, this did sound like a great injustice somehow.

[You can restart from the beginning.]

“…Restart from the beginning?"

[You can start this journey from the beginning once more.]

It was around then when I got this ominous chill creep down my backside.

Goddammit, this was a regression story?

My lips began moving all on their own again. "What the hell? I got here after going through so much rubbish, yet you want me to go through that crap again from the beginning?"

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[No, you won't suffer this time.]

"What?"

[Exploit your comrades to the fullest, and become an existence that does not save anyone. Indeed, you shall become a 'Demon King' that

only lives for himself.]

Right then, blinding rays of light exploded out from the sacred texts.

[Flashback sequence has concluded.]

[The play will begin in earnest!]

It seemed that the story up until here was all a part of the prologue. Which meant that the real episode would start from now. As if it was waiting for this moment, the words

'Episode 1' floated up to the view.

And I grandly freaked out next.

~Episode 1. The Demon King of Salvation~

…Wha??

As if it had read my mind, the narration started again.

(It was not a well-known tale, but once upon a time, Sun Wukong used to be called the

'Demon King of Salvation'.)

I wondered what kind of dogshit crap this was, but for the time being, decided to hear it out till the end.

(This small stone monkey had a nasty habit of sacrificing himself to save other people, and many of those who received his unwanted rescue attempts ended up with psychological scars.)

(Gods and Buddhas of the heavens all criticised him for it, yet that dumb rock-for-brains continued to throw his life away to save other people over and over again.) N-no, hang on a minute here.

(The heaven's Great Jade Emperor and Buddha felt that they could no longer accept such actions from Sun Wukong anymore and imprisoned the Monkey King inside the stone crate under the Marble Mountain.)

(And our story starts from there.)

[Judge, 'King of Stone Monkeys', likes this particular backstory.]

[Portion of judges have awarded points for the plot that mirrors the current trend.]

[2 points have been awarded.]

My attention was drawn to the 'mirroring the current trend' message. Ahh, so could this be the reason?

[First episode has begun.]

[Unrestricted speech section has begun.]

[Do your best to create an interesting and enjoyable Fable by acting according to your role.]

I shuddered greatly and regained my wits. Chills crept up from various parts of my body, and my back hurt like crazy as well. I heard the noises of pitch-black soil fall around me. My current situation was that only my head was peeking out from beneath the mountain.

[Currently, you're sealed under the Five Elements Mountain.]

Well, it seemed that I was currently being squashed flat by the Five Elements Mountain.

[Audiences are curious about what your reaction will be.]

(Scenario Master is urging you to say something fitting your role.)
This was the very first scene after the MC had just finished regressing.

Since I saw this situation appearing frequently in genre novels, I figured that I'd be rather familiar with what to say here, but after finding myself in those characters'

shoes, I couldn't even imagine what to say anymore.

Still, I decided to say something regardless.

"Where am I? Wasn't I returning with the sacred texts just now?"

Obviously, no normal, sane-minded person would be talking to himself like this.

“…Five Elements Mountain?! Holy cow, did I really regress?"

So, I couldn't help but get shocked at myself capable of muttering out such lines with ease.

[Audiences now understand your current situation.]

(Scenario Master is nodding their head in approval of your instincts for dialogue.) (Scenario Master has acknowledged you.)

Goddammit. I wanted to hide in a hole so bad right now.

[Portion of the audience is waiting in anticipation for the next scene.]

I recalled the Journey to the West's plot points.

According to the original, Sun Wukong was supposed to wait for 500 years below the Five Element Mountain. And so, five minutes passed by, then ten after that.

…E-eiii, there's no way, right?

(Sun Wukong's ears perked up after hearing noisy voices coming from afar.) I breathed a sigh of relief. Now according to the original, the first person Sun Wukong met was Tang Sanzang.

(As he looked at the familiar people approaching him, Sun Wukong began reminiscing about the ancient past.)

Two children were walking closer to my location. Two kids that wore cute-looking Buddhist robes and sporting toy-like crowns on their heads.

(The memories of that day, when he first met Tang Sanzang.)

(Sun Wukong was lost within the rose-tinted reminiscence.) Chills slowly crept down my back now.

That faintest sense of deja vu I felt earlier was now gradually becoming reality. [The 4th Wall] buzzing noisily then asked me.

「Y ou re ally d idn't kn ow?」

I couldn't answer back.

That suspicion I had when I saw those five 'S' letters; even though I believed it couldn't be possible, a part of my heart still hoped against hope.

I gritted my teeth and did my best to hold onto my consciousness trying to slip away.

"Ah, he's over there. I think it's that ahjussi."

"Let me go ask him."

They were perhaps the world's smallest pair of 'Sanzang'.

Yi Gil-Yeong grabbed my head to lift it up and asked me next.

"You bastard, are you the 'Demon King of Salvation', Sun Wukong?"

Fin.

(TL: Okay, lots of Korean Internet lingo to go through - ㅎㅇ means "hello"; ㅇ is "yup", so when used multiple time, simply means "yup, yup"; ㅇㅋ means "OK"; finally, ㄱㄱ

= go go, also can mean see ya)

Not knowing whether to laugh or cry, all I could do was to look at the kids and reply.

"I am."

And then, I heard the warning message next.

[Warning! You have come in contact with some of 's members!]

[Chaos residing somewhere deep inside you have begun wiggling.]

*

[Judge, 'King of Stone Monkeys', has revealed his displeasure!]

[The contest this time doesn't have anything interesting to watch.]

A young monkey covered entirely in a coat of rather beautiful golden fur roughly scratched his mane and, while looking at the screens displayed on holographic panels, yawned over and over again.

Another monkey wearing a cowboy get-up watched that from the sidelines before making a retort.

[Judge, 'Manager of Heaven's Stables', is chastising the 'King of Stone Monkeys'.]

[Meihouwang (Handsome Monkey King), you truly are an impatient one. If you took your time perusing, then you'd have found one or two interesting stories by now.]

[Hng, Bimawen (Keeper of Heavenly Horses), so was it your lofty

patience that allowed you to clean up horse shit for over two weeks straight?]

[…I'd like to talk about only the refined matters in this place, if we could.]

[I can already tell what you're going to do with my eyes closed. I mean, you'll just slap

high scores to any story that doesn't feature stables in it, anyway.]

[But, don't you also lose your mind in excitement whenever a story features Mountain of Flowers and Fruit?]

[Oiii, Great Sage! What do you think? Have you found something interesting to watch yet?]

That question was directed to a certain pure-blonde haired man yawning loudly with his chin supported by the Ruyi Bang. He lazily opened his lips. [This year doesn't seem to have anything fresh, that's for sure.]

[Thought so.]

[We had quite a few people running around with wild imaginations in the past, hadn't we? Like, how we were portrayed as members of a battle-maniac species that grew stronger by overcoming deadly hurdles…]

[Hmm, yeah. That was really fun back in the day. But I didn't like the way they portrayed us as humans.]

Bimawen's words elicited a smirk from the Great Sage. [Oi, looky here. You guys might be monkeys, but I'm almost human, you know?]

[…But you changed only because of that Fable's influence, didn't you?]

Meihouwang, Bimawen, and the Great Sage.

They were different Fable Bodies of the one that enjoyed the true name of 'Sun Wukong'. At first, they were all one being, but after each of the Fables developed separately, the various personalities split apart from one another as well.

[This kid, Fei Hu's rate of growth is no joke… At this rate, we might have ourselves a brand new 'Sun Wukong'.]

[Yeaaah, sure. Something that hasn't happened in the last few thousand years will suddenly happen now. Sure thing.]

Three separate Sun Wukongs had gathered inside this large judge's office to take a gander at the various Fables of the 'Journey to the West Remake' being played out on

the holographic panels. Some of them were boring, while a few seemed to be promising enough. They even pressed the 'Like' button on a couple of unfamiliar but interesting ones, too. They also didn't forget to assign scores as the three of them constantly bickered among themselves.

Meihouwang asked. [Hey, Great Sage. I forgot to ask you. What happened to those guys the last time?]

[Which guys?]

[You know, back when you asked us for help so Bimawen and I lent you our powers.]

[Ahh, you mean the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'? It worked out alright. But their representative went missing.]

That prompted a retort from Bimawen. [Are you talking about that fool whom you kept chasing after but never chose you as his sponsor?]

[…Hey, I never chased him around, got that? I only responded once or twice at his ardent pleas, that's all.]

[Oh, but for that once or twice, I remember you willingly sacrificing some of your scant hair, though?]

[Shut up.] The Great Sage roughly dug his ear with the Ruyi Bang and changed the topic. [By the way, why hasn't Douzhanshengfo (Victorious Fighting Buddha) arrived yet? All the Sun Wukongs have gathered in one place, so how come he's missing from this occasion?]

[You know that nerd's always late.]

[What about Bajie and Wujing?]

[They went to speak to the Heavenly Palace people.]

[…That Jade Emperor dude, is he thinking of butting in during the judging again?]

[As long as our opinions don't clash, it doesn't matter if that side wishes to interfere.]

[But, our opinions have never matched before, so there's our problem.]

As if they were waiting for this very moment, the door to the judge's office was pushed open, and Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing made their entrance.

[Excuse me, hyung-nims. The higher-ups say that it's about time we announce this year's best candidates…]

[Shut it. Can't you see we're still busy?]

Both Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing flinched from Meihouwang's threatening voice and took hurried steps back.

The Great Sage asked them. [By the way, who's the lady behind you?]

[Ah, apologies for the late introduction. She's this year's new judge. I heard that she's also Sakyamuni's successor.]

[…Sakyamuni had a successor?]

Someone entered the office in a calm, composed gait.

However, the moment the Great Sage saw the woman wearing a fine, elegant Buddhist robe and a slender crown, his eyes trembled from shock.

Bimawen sensed that and asked him. [Someone you know?]

The Great Sage didn't reply and simply stared at her face for a while. The woman didn't reciprocate that gaze, instead choosing to cross the table and head towards the panel displaying the Fables.

Bimawen used his chin to point and speak. [This is actually good news. It might not be a bad idea to hear the newbie's opinion. Hey, Miss Sakyamuni's successor, which Fable takes your fancy?]

The woman's robe, busy swaying about, came to a stop in a certain spot.

Sakyamuni's successor stared at a certain story with a pair of still eyes. Her hand slowly reached out and touched the display, causing ripples to spread out like the emotions of longing itself.

[I seem to like this Fable the most.]

*

「Y ou kn ew al re ady Kim Dok Ja.」

[The 4th Wall] was right. In a way, you could say that I knew

something like this would happen. I kind of suspected that the folks in this Fable chamber might be the 's members.

[The agreement with the Wenny King is in danger!]

And also, I thought that it'd give rise to such a result, too. Even then, I couldn't not make this choice.

- You've been warned not to get in contact with them.

[999] sitting on my shoulder whispered to me. Just by meeting the kids, a change was already taking place within my Incarnation body.

[The transformation to the Outer God is accelerating due to the risk to the agreement condition.]

'I haven't gone against the agreement itself. Technically speaking, the content of the deal was to [never reveal my identity to Kim Dok-Ja Company], wasn't it?'

- The moment they find out, everything will be over.

'I know that already, so stop worrying.'

[Outer God transformation progress percentage: 3%]

Most likely, I'd end up as an Outer God like the 'Secretive Plotter' when that percentage maxes out. I was thinking that honestly, it shouldn't matter as long as I fulfil our agreement before that. For now, I was happy to see the kids walking in front of me in such great harmony.

[A small number of audience members complain that Sanzang can't be two people.]

While listening to the messages streaming in, I continued to walk behind the kids leading in the front. I heard that children grow remarkably fast every day; that statement really hit home, after realising that they indeed had grown so much taller

already.

Now that I thought about it, it sure had been a while since I spent some time with them like this.

I had no idea what either Yi Gil-Yeong or Shin Yu-Seung were thinking about most of the time. It was what the Scenario Master had said. I 'saved' them on my whim, and abandoned them behind with no thoughts of taking any responsibility.

Just like how it was like for me in the past, these two kids had been left alone and neglected by me.

"Oii, Demon King of Salvation."

"Yes?"

…So, this was more or less the punishment that I deserve.

Shin Yu-Seung watching on from the side spoke up. "You shouldn't be so rude to someone you don't know."

"But, Su-Yeong noona said I should act like this, you know?"

"Even then, you should still stick to basic etiquette."

As expected of my Incarnation.

She studied me with pitying eyes, before whispering to Yi Gil-Yeong via [Nebula Chat].

Of course, since I was also a member of the same Nebula, I could hear her words just fine.

- This way, he'll trust us more, you dummy. What will you do if he decides to wreak havoc later?

I felt goosebumps break out on my skin.

-… You're actually scared of him? Look at his current state, will ya?

For sure, I didn't buy the [Great Sage, Heaven's Equal Avatar Set] sold by

so my current attire consisted of nothing more than the 500-year old

"standard"

ragged clothing.

Shin Yu-Seung patted the dirt away on my clothes and politely greeted me. "It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Constellation-nim. We'll be in your care."

"I'll be in yours as well. Ah, also. How should I call you both?"

Yi Gil-Yeong replied as if he was waiting for that. "I'm the monk Xuan (玄). And she's the monk Zang (奘). Call us that from now on."

His voice was full of mischievousness as if he was playing a game.

So, then. Yi Gil-Yeong was the monk 'Xuan', while Shin Yu-Seung was the monk 'Zang', was it? To think, they'd split the name of the monk Xuanzang and give it to the kids. It was indeed a rather adorable idea.

[A portion of audience members think that the two monks are quite adorable.]

[Portion of judges find the setting of 'Two Monks' interesting.]

[4 points have been acquired.]

Yi Gil-Yeong, still drunk on all these new settings, continued to yap about himself.

Meanwhile, Shin Yu-Seung whispered in my ear. "I'm sure you're a little bit confused by all these strange set-ups, yes? I'm really sorry. Our Scenario Master is a bit of an eccentric, so…"

"No, it's fine."

I could guess who the Scenario Master was already. Well, there could ever be only one person capable of coming up with such an out-there

story in , after all.

"Still, you don't have to worry about anything. We'll definitely look after you well. All you have to do is to ride the bus well and just quietly follow us."

Tears almost broke out from my eyes after being subjected to all this friendly treatment. It would've hardly been enough for me to console the kids first, yet they were worried about me, instead?

What a shameful thing this was.

(At that moment, Sun Wukong swore to protect Sanzang in this life, as well.) That's right. I'd definitely protect these kids.

I might not have been able to do my role properly in the past but at least, from now on I…

"Kugugugugugu!"

Noises of explosions came from somewhere. I reflexively scanned my vicinity.

"Ku-dudududu!"

It did sound like explosions, sure, but something also felt a bit off about them.

Something must've exploded, but why did it sound as if the noise was made by someone's mouth??

Shin Yu-Seung hurriedly approached my side and whispered again. "Please don't panic. We're simply mirroring the original's setting."

“…Pardon?"

"I heard that in the original story, all onomatopoeia were written in

between quotation marks."

[A portion of the judges are impressed by the unexpected mirroring of the original work!]

[10 additional points have been acquired!]

What the hell? I thought such a thing was a mistake solely reserved to mass-market fantasy genre novels…

I wasn't even given enough time to get flustered by the unexpected level of observation by the Scenario Master on the original work. The kids pushed me behind them and took large steps forward.

Having a look again, I realised that the so-called explosion noises seemed to have

originated from a large canyon in front of us.

(Sun Wukong stared deeply at the Shepan Mountain's Yingchou Stream Canyon. Since this was his second stab at life, he knew what would pop out from that canyon.) If my memory was right, then the second being the group encountered in the Journey to the West was…

(The third son of the Dragon King of West Sea, Jade Dragon.)

…Right, it's him. And he would become…

(He was the existence that would be reborn as Tang Sanzang's White Dragon Horse.) Well, since the narration took care of everything, I didn't have much else to say here.

I stepped forward and spoke up. "Both of you, please hide somewhere. I shall handle this."

If my memory was working fine, then one of the players took on the role of the 'Tang Sanzang's White Dragon Horse'. I was pretty sure that

he was the one behind the current event.

Seeing that the kids were participating in this Fable chamber, the rest of the players should also be from , but if someone with ill intention had somehow butted in here…

“…We told you, you just stay on the bus."

A small but pretty darn strong hand grabbed my shoulder. I looked back to find Shin Yu-Seung forming a rather scary smile.

"A guy who can't even afford proper clothes wants to show off? Step back!"

Yi Gil-Yeong cracked his knuckles and took a step forward, as well.

I tried to urgently chase after the kids, but they had already ran ahead to the canyon and started fighting a blue-hued Dragon that flew out from there.

"Ku-kwakwakwakwakwa!!"

Yi Gil-Yeong shouted out the onomatopoeia and rushed forward, and the blue Dragon jumping out from the canyon also roared out in response. I immediately recognised who that Dragon was.

…It's the Chimera Dragon??

Kids fought with the blue Dragon as if they were having a dance-off in the air, and through [Taming], subjugated the creature in no time at all.

[Audience members are impressed by the kid Sanzangs' martial prowess!]

[A small number of audience members are lodging a protest, complaining that Sanzangs are too powerful.]

[A portion of judges are surprised by this unexpected turn of events!]

And a short while later.

['Player 6' -nim has joined the group.]

The Chimera Dragon was transformed into Xuanzang's white horse, and was dragged over here by the two children.

While trying to understand this situation, which was resolved without me needing to do anything, I recalled the conversation I had with the Scenario Master earlier.

- What will the retired Sun Wukong be doing?

- Nothing.

Only now did I understand just a little bit. This story seemed to be created for this from the word go. And right in the next instant, a message from a familiar Constellation landed in my ear.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', finds the current Fable's plot quite interesting.]

[10 additional points have been acquired.]

*

A day passed by like that, then another day went by. I was gradually waking up to the

'identity' of this Fable chamber.

"It's a grasshopper. Eat."

"Demon King of Salvation-nim. Do your legs hurt?"

「This Fable is 'one for Sun Wukong's benefit'.」

(Sun Wukong was really comfortable.)

This would be my first time to be all relaxed and leisurely ever since the scenarios began. My brain had almost seized up after it got submerged in the sea of comfort for too long.

[New Fable is germinating in you!]

[Fable, 'Sneezing Without Hands', has begun its storytelling.]

I could just about make a guess as to why Han Su-Yeong came up with a scenario like this one.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', likes this plot development very much.]

The Journey to the West was a story built around Sun Wukong's sacrifice. Even the later variations had similar themes, too.

So, what would happen if a 'Fable specifically for Sun Wukong' made its appearance?

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is envious of you.]

[Judge, 'Manager of Heaven's Stables', is envious of you.]

[Score: 312]

It seemed that Han Su-Yeong's claim of being a popular author was true. The Fable's total votes had already surpassed 300 and we were enjoying smooth sailing so far.

And well, such a plot wasn't necessarily bad for my companions, either.

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Nominally, the MC of the story was Sun Wukong, but as every battle was handled by my companions instead, all the shares of the Fable at

the end of the scenario would naturally belong to alone. What a well-thought-out scheme this was – get a nice score tally, and also ensure you'd walk away with Fable shares, too.

"Argh, I wanna play some games on my phone."

"But you played so much before coming here."

Even though the kids adorably bickered with each other, they didn't forget to feed me, helped me fall asleep, and hell, even groomed the fur on my head, too.

Yi Gil-Yeong asked me with a pout. "So, like, what do you do originally?"

"It's bad manners to ask about his private life, you dummy."

Shin Yu-Seung pulling out premature grey hair on my head tackled the boy immediately.

I was slightly worried whether such a meta conversation was allowed or not, but for the time being, I decided to answer him. I thought about it and realised that I hadn't had a chat like this with the kids up until now.

"I just enjoy reading novels."

"Novels? Ohhh, I like reading them, too."

Yi Gil-Yeong liked reading novels? Really? That was an unexpected piece of info.

He was now really amped up as he continued on. "Can I recommend you a novel?"

He dared to make a recommendation to me, a veteran of over ten years in reading genre novels? Fine, let's hear him, then.

"It's [SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor]. It's a super-duper awesome novel, so make sure to read it later, okay?"

Before I noticed it, my second ego jumped out to the fore. "But, as I understand, that novel was a resounding failure."

"Failure? I heard it was really popular, though? I guess you don't have a discerning eye~."

Han Su-Yeong, that moron. Did she boast her novel to these young, gullible kids?

Shin Yu-Seung listening on quickly joined in, as well. "I also really like reading novels!"

"Oh, really? May I ask what kind of novels?"

I kind of was looking forward to her answer. Indeed, if it was Yu-Seung-ee…

"Yes, you may! Raymond Carver, Murakami Haruki…!"

…Now that was a line-up of authors I had heard of before.

I was able to figure out who was in charge of the children's education during my absence.

Yu Sang-Ah-ssi. She should have reincarnated safely by now.

Shin Yu-Seung looked at the dumpling on my shoulder and asked me a question. "By the way, you must really like Murim dumplings?"

"Yes, I do."

“…An ahjussi I know also really likes them, too."

I knew well who she was talking about there.

Yi Gil-Yeong rubbed his stomach and muttered to himself. "Aah, I wish I could eat some dumplings right about now."

I thought I could sense the 'Murim dumpling' on my shoulder suddenly flinch a little.

Indeed, it had been way too long since I had a proper meal.

(But suddenly, the aroma of dumplings began wafting out from

somewhere.) The majority of events taking place within the Journey to the West all began with

'suddenly', just like this.

We exchanged glances and tracked down the origin of that fantastic smell.

And so, who long did we walk on the mountain trail? A huge factory now stood before us.

“…Can a thing like that even exist in this era?"

Just as I began wondering if Han Su-Yeong's version of the Journey was set in the steampunk universe, several humanoids began running outside the factory and headed this way.

"Euh, euh! Everyone, run away!"

However, the escapees were caught by some kind of an invisible force and were dragged back to the factory.

"Nooooo!"

Wondering what on earth was going on here, we quickly sneaked our way inside the factory.

Not too long afterwards, we got to witness the spectacle of thousands of slaves busy kneading and manufacturing something while sticking very close to the moving conveyor belts.

"Could that be…?"

The dumpling [999] on my shoulder whispered.

- They are making [Murim dumplings].

Thousands upon thousands of Murim dumplings were being carried

away by the conveyor belts to a destination unknown.

I stared at the unending 'river' of dumplings and began wondering about the person we were about to meet this time.

(There was only one creature in the whole of the Journey to the West that lusted after food this badly.)

As if he was waiting for us, a man suddenly began speaking to us.

Fin.

"Hello there! Are you all out-of-towners?"

The one who spoke to us was a man on the wrong side of middle-age.

The well-mannered Shin Yu-Seung stepped forward first and offered up a greeting.

"We were on our way to the Western Regions to visit Buddha-nim."

"Hoh, Buddha, is it? Unlike how you look, I see that you are high priests of Buddhism!"

Yi Gil-Hyeong saw how the middle-aged man was impressed by the revelation and began standing tall with his hands behind his back while going "Ahem!"

The older man studied both children with unreadable eyes before finally shifting his gaze in my direction.

"In that case, the gentleman next to you is… Hiiieeek?!"

His complexion paled instantly as he stared at the [Murim dumpling] on my shoulder.

"T-that, that's a [Murim dumpling]…!!"

"Ah, this guy's just a doll. I like dumplings, that's why."

"…I-is that so? You really surprised me there."

The middle-aged man patted his chest down, still looking somewhat freaked out.

Judging from the armband slung across his upper arm like that, he must've been the supervisor of this factory.

Thinking that this was a fortunate turn of events, we decided to ask this man some questions.

"What is this factory, exactly? Why are you making lots of dumplings like that?"

“…Could it be that you came here without knowing anything?" The middle-aged man studied us with a troubled look on his face, before carrying on as a lengthy sigh escaped from his lips. "This is all the fault of that scary Yogoe."

"A Yogoe, you say?"

"Indeed. Originally, this place wasn't a factory."

According to the middle-aged man, this place used to be a peaceful little rural village.

But on a certain day, a tall, hulking swine-type Yogoe with jet-black skin suddenly made his appearance, kidnapped every female in the village, enslaved all the men, and created this very factory.

"That bastard took my daughter and wife as his concubines and locked us up in this place! I'm sure you can tell that there's a strange supernatural power swirling around here and it prevents us slaves from leaving this factory. Not only that, that Yogoe devours so much, too… We're forced to make dumplings all day long, but it seems to never be enough, you see."

[The factory's manufacturing system is searching for the 'Supervisor'!]

"D-damn it! I have to get going now."

The middle-aged man hurriedly put on a pair of sanitary gloves and a face mask before rushing towards the conveyor belts.

Before I could step up and say something, Shin Yu-Seung reached out and grabbed the middle-aged man first. "It's unfair for you ahjussis to perform slave labour like this.

Not only that, you said that Yogoe even kidnapped females of the village too. We can't overlook this."

As expected of my Incarnation.

Sure, we had to do this in order to advance the plot, but still…

"We shall help you. Where can we find that Yogoe?"

"Even if it's you monk-nims, that Yogoe is… Will you really help us?"

"Of course we will."

The middle-aged man kept rolling his eyes around for a bit but eventually told us the direction where we could find this Yogoe.

"We leave it all up to you! Please, defeat that Yogoe!"

We nodded our heads and walked in the direction pointed out to us.

(The Dumpling Yogoe was waiting at the end of this 「Dumpling Road.」) We walked alongside the so-called Dumpling Road, created out of the conveyor belts.

As if he couldn't hold it any longer, Yi Gil-Yeong began picking up and chowing down dumplings every couple of steps. "… Hey, this is really tasty!"

Of course they were. These were none other than [Murim dumplings], after all. However, it seemed that the foremost expert on all things [Murim dumpling] was thinking a bit differently than us.

- The aroma is a little off.

'What?'

- Hand me a dumpling.

While walking behind the two kids, I cautiously picked up a dumpling and handed it over to, uh, the dumpling on my shoulder. And sure enough, watching one dumpling eat another one proved to be a rather grotesque sight.

- The combination of ingredients is wrong. It seems that he has not mastered the art of [Murim dumplings].

Murim dumpling number [999] formed a somewhat dissatisfied expression and began ordering me around out of the blue.

- Take half a spoon of the substance inside the green container and

add that in.

Since we still had a long way to go anyway, I decided to follow this little guy's orders and began adding the ingredients inside the dumpling skins.

- You must familiarise yourself with the flames of True Samadhi Fire. Place the steamer so that the yellow flames are touching it in the middle and then, heat it.

This had to be some kind of a dream.

To think, I was learning how to make dumplings from a dumpling while walking on the Dumpling Road.

And so, how long did I walk on this dreamlike road?

At the end of this 'road', I was rewarded with a packet of appetising [Murim dumplings].

While looking at [999] nodding his head triumphantly, I began wondering what the hell I just did here.

"Looks like that's our destination."

I looked in the direction Shin Yu-Seong was pointing at.

There was a pathway at the end of the conveyor belt leading to large stone walls and a newly-built residential area. A handful of workers were delivering the packaged dumplings over there.

It seemed that we had arrived at where the dumplings' consumer was.

We walked closer, prompting the security guard to approach us.

"Who are you people?"

Shin Yu-Seong grinned brightly and replied. "We are but humble

monks on our way to the west to seek an audience with Buddha-nim and acquire the sacred texts. We coincidentally stumbled across this place during our journey. Will it be fine for us to enter?"

"Ah, are you by any chance the 'party of the Tang Dynasty's monks'?"

"That's correct."

I was dumbfounded by that conversation. It had been only a few days since this journey had begun, so there was no freaking way that the rumours of us would've

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arrived here already.

[You've learned of the Fable, 'Words Swifter Than Feet'!]

Shin Yu-Seong whispered in my ear. "I heard that this is how it's like in the original."

…Ah, so that's how it was?

[A portion of the judges are impressed by the Scenario Master's high level of research.]

[10 additional points are awarded for the excellent reflection of the original work!]

To think that they would judge us imitating the improbable timing as seen in the original as research… How shocking.

The gatekeeper spoke. "My apologies, but our village doesn't permit entry to any outsiders. I'm sorry that you had to walk this far to get here, but I implore you to turn ba… Kek?!"

Yi Gil-Yeong must've found the gatekeeper's explanation long-winded, because the boy punched the poor man in the belly and knocked him out flat. As if he was making an excuse, he quickly spoke. "Let's just

rush inside and beat up that dumb Yogoe. Su-Yeong noona said that the audience members like speedy plot development."

Han Su-Yeong, that idiot. She seemed to have taught these kids something reaaaally nice.

[A portion of the audience is satisfied by Tang Sanzang's decision.]

[One additional point has been acquired!]

I looked at Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong and spoke to them. "In that case, let's go in."

"Nope. Ahjussi, you stay here and relax."

"Excuse me?"

"We told you, Sun Wukong is supposed to ride the bus and that's it."

"But…"

"Hah-ah… I really didn't want to do this but seriously now."

Shin Yu-Seung held the rosary beads and began reciting something. "Prajna-paramita-hrdaya-KimDokJa. Don't-try-anything-unnecessary-and-stay-put-sutra…"

…Wha?

[Tang Sanzang has recited the 'Constrictive Sutra (緊箍咒)'!]

[Item, 'Constrictive Headband (緊箍兒)' is reacting to it!]

I was immediately overcome with pain akin to my head shattering into pieces and blacked out on the spot.

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…So, that must've been the 'Constrictive Sutra' that I had read about.

By the time I woke up, both Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong had disappeared into the village. I looked to my side to discover a damn dumpling staring at me with a mocking leer.

- What will you do now?

'…Go after them, obviously.'

Now normally, it should be fine to let those two kids be. They had become strong Incarnations that didn't require my help, after all.

However, something felt off to me here.

(If Sun Wukong's gut feeling was right, then it was pretty obvious which creature they would encounter here.)

I could think of someone when it came to all things Murim dumplings-related. But to think that idiot would use slaves to operate a factory, and even become a villain that kidnaps women… I couldn't wrap my head around it.

(It was then, someone discovered Sun Wukong.)

"Kyahk! It's a Yogoe!"

I turned my head to find several women standing over yonder.

(Ladies who saw Sun Wukong's appearance were greatly shocked.) They pointed to my pointy monkey-like ears peeking out from the golden hair and began backing away. But then, they spotted the dumpling on my shoulder and became rather chatty all of a sudden.

"He must like Murim dumplings…"

"…Does that mean he's a good Yogoe?"

I wasn't sure how these ladies got to that illogical-sounding conclusion, but I figured that, what with things developing like this, I might as well exploit the situation a bit.

"By any chance, are you the kidnapped villagers?"

My question caused the ladies to stare at each other, evidently confused about something.

“…Kidnap? We've never been kidnapped, though?"

"But, I heard that a pitch-black-coloured swine-like Yogoe has kidnapped you all?"

"A swine…? No way… Are you perhaps talking about Zhu Bajie-nim?"

…Zhu Bajie "-nim"??

"Sure, our Bajie-nim's skin is somewhat tan, but it's not to the point of calling it pitch black…”

"But, he does resemble a swine in some aspect, doesn't he? Like, his thick biceps, or those tough, strong thighs. But, that's not the same as being a swine…”

Something was definitely going down the wrong direction here.

With an excellent timing, a huge commotion broke out in the middle of the village so I quickly ran over there. It was pretty obvious who was behind that disturbance.

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"Stop right there!"

A boy's voice loudly resounded out. I pushed my way past the wall of women until I came face to face with the village's large plaza, a large litter in its middle, and the two children standing in front of it.

There was no need to mention that they were Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung, of course.

The boy stepped forward like a kid general and shouted out. "You're the Yogoe that kidnapped many of the village's women and constructed a dumpling factory to satisfy your selfish interests and desires, aren't you!"

[A portion of the audience is singing praises of Tang Sanzang's adorableness!]

[Judge, 'Successor of Sakyamuni' has added 5 additional points.]

…Right, he was really adorable.

Didn't matter who was inside that litter, there was no way anyone would be able to fight this kid after hearing… No, hang on, if it was that bastard, yeah, he might actually.

And like clockwork, an incredible level of Status whipped up into a frenzy from inside litter currently covered in screens.

"Lower the litter."

A heavy-sounding tone of voice came out from inside the carrier. It seemed to contain this surprising power to change the mood of the surrounding atmosphere with just a single word.

I swallowed my saliva and walked up to the kids.

“…We told you to stay back because it might get dangerous!"

"Leaving me behind like that is actually even more dangerous."

Soon, the screen of the litter slowly rose up, and the problematic Yogoe finally made its appearance.

(Sun Wukong knew who that was.)

(Marshal Canopy/天蓬元帥, Zhu Bajie.)

Shin Yu-Seung's jaw dropped in dumbfoundedness. "That's… the Pigsy?"

(Sun Wukong thought that something was definitely wrong here.) (Because, what he saw was not the 'Zhu Bajie' he remembered.) For a moment there, I had this feeling that this world's balance of beauty had tilted to one side. A nonsensical amount of cheering erupted out all around us next.

"Oh, ooooh! Dear Zhu Bajie-nim!"

For sure, calling a face like that 'Yogoe' didn't seem all that out of place. Because, well, it was inconceivable that a normal human would be blessed with such looks, after all.

Eyebrows seemingly drawn by a single, uninterrupted stroke of a famed artist's brush; a nose and a chin shaped in perfect angles that defied attempts to measure them through mere devices of men; a pair of deep eyes seemingly carved out of a beautiful jewel containing all the misfortunes found in this world.

If someone saw those features and not get immediately drawn in by them, then there must be something wrong with that person.

And sure enough, the villagers, regardless of gender or age, were pouring out their praises towards this 'Zhu Bajie'.

"Zhu Bajie-nim, hooray!"

"The creator of [Murim dumplings], hooray!"

The so-called 'Pigsy', half of his black-coloured vest unbuttoned and wearing a pair of black jeans, climbed down from the litter.

"Finally, the day we decide the victor has arrived! You sooty bastard!"

Yi Gil-Yeong triumphantly roared out as if he was expecting this. He began swinging his small fists around as if he was playing 'Jwibulnori' and dashed towards Zhu Bajie.

Of course, there was no way such a thing was going to work.

"Let me go! You pig!!"

Zhu Bajie easily picked the boy up by the scruff of his neck, glanced at Shin Yu-Seung briefly, and strode over to where we were.

“…You bastard must be Sun Wukong."

Fin.

Right, I had a feeling that he'd be 'Zhu Bajie' from the beginning. However… Just in which aspect was he anywhere remotely 'Pigsy'?

[A small portion of the audience cannot comprehend the outer appearance of Zhu Bajie.]

[A small portion of audience members are complaining that this is an insult to the original work!]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', argues that this doesn't even make sense!]

It seemed that there were some members of the audience with a similar train of thought as me. And then, in the next moment…

[The majority of the audience welcome the choice of the current Zhu Bajie.]

…Ng??

[Number of votes obtained is increasing greatly!]

[Fable chamber's ranking has increased greatly!]

…Could it be?

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is satisfied with his outer appearance.]

Those in the know should already be aware of it – this 'Cleanser of Altars' was Zhu Bajie's Modifier.

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is deeply satisfied by the casting of his role.]

[150 additional points have been awarded!]

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As Yu Jung-Hyeok glared at me with his trademark piercing eyes, large letters slowly floated up before my eyes.

~ Episode 2. The Conquering King, Zhu Bajie ~

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[Congratulations! Your Fable chamber's ranking has broken into the top 100.]

Han Su-Yeong looked at the message floating up before her eyes and scrolled to the next page with a wry grin on her face.

The folks inside the panel screen were acting according to the plot she had cooked up.

She pushed up the horn-rimmed glasses on her nose that didn't have any lenses and muttered to herself.

“…These kids' sucky acting might cause me a heart attack at this rate."

Fortunately, though, her Fable chamber broke past the 1000 voting points mark and had entered the upper ranks. There was a knock coming from the door behind her, and Yi Su-Gyeong stepped into the room.

"I've brought some fruits."

"If you bothered to even knock, you should at least wait for an answer. Or don't knock at all."

"How is everything going?"

“…About as I expected. That Fei Hu's rank is way too high and it's not as easy as I thought to catch up."

Yi Su-Gyeong confirmed Han Su-Yeong's Fable chamber ranking over the latter's shoulder and spoke. "It's only been a couple of days, but you're already so high up.

Amazing."

"Compared to my heyday, this sort of achievement is nothing, you know. Besides, we don't know what'll happen next."

Han Su-Yeong bit into the apple as she fiercely burned the torch of determination. She

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could see the dumbfounded face of Sun Wukong within the panel screen. "… From here onwards, it'll depend on how well that Sun

Wukong does his job."

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"You're right. I'm Sun Wukong."

Yu Jung-Hyeok heard my reply and glared at me with questioning eyes. Right afterwards, his right eye glowed in the golden light.

[The usage of 'appraisal skills' isn't allowed within the applicable scenario location.]

Due to the worldview's restriction, his [Eye of Sage] didn't activate. Since I had already expected that to happen, I wasn't even remotely surprised by it.

"Looks like you wanted to shoot lasers from your eye," said I with a refreshing grin on my face.

Whatever the case might have been, Zhu Bajie was fated to become my underling, according to the original story.

"Shin Yu-Seung! What are standing around dazed for?! Quickly defeat this guy!!"

Yi Gil-Yeong, still dangling in the air, began to thrash about frantically.

She glanced at him as if it was none of her business, and asked Zhu Bajie, instead.

"Even if you like dumplings that much, how could you build a factory and use people like slaves? And why did you kidnap women in the first place?"

While listening to her yell, I studied our surroundings.

「Zhu Bajie was a demon king of lust and gluttony in the original 'Journey to the West'.」

If you thought about the original's storyline, then the episode we were currently experiencing wasn't a complete impossibility.

However, even if she detested Yu Jung-Hyeok, Han Su-Yeong wouldn't have stuck this closely to the original. She even changed the 'Ways of Survival' to that minute degree, didn't she?

Besides, even if she wrote such a scenario, Yu Jung-Hyeok wouldn't have agreed to…

"I didn't kidnap these women."

His words quickly prompted the surrounding ladies to yell out.

"That's right! We weren't kidnapped at all!"

I studied their expressions. Not one of them looked to be under the mind-control spell.

Meanwhile, Yi Gil-Yeong yelled out in response. "So what?! Didn't you enslave people to make lots of dumplings so you can eat them all??"

Right, that's what the slave in the factory told us. However, there was one thing that I couldn't understand.

Yu Jung-Hyeok really liked [Murim dumplings]. It was verging on obsession, even. But, would someone like him ever touch dumplings mass-produced in a factory?

「"I do not eat what others have made."」

Yu Jung-Hyeok even declared as thus, so it didn't make sense for him to use slaves just for the purpose of eating mass-produced dumplings.

And as if to prove me right, Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke in a slightly sorrowful tone of voice.

"I haven't eaten these [Murim dumplings]."

"What are you talking about?! You dumpling psycho! Shin Yu-Seong! Do something already!"

Rather than answering the boy, Yu Jung-Hyeok stared past the crowd around us.

Dozens of houses were lined up along the alleyway. The delivered dumplings were placed before each house's entrance. I could see the village's young kids flocking around them to happily eat them.

“…Could it be?"

It was at this point that a warning message suddenly appeared over the whole village.

[A revolt has occurred in the 'Dumpling factory'!]

The village's entrance once guarded by the gatekeeper crumbled and the factory's slaves rushed in.

"We will no longer labour for you!"

"Dumplings over here, dumplings over there, dumplings freaking everywhere!!"

"Kill him! Kill that pig bastard!!"

The eyes of the slaves gleamed viciously as they wielded hoes and rakes.

Women were greatly astonished and began shouting out.

"Those Yogoes still haven't learned their lessons!"

"Yogoes?? But, this guy here is the real Yogoe, isn't he?"

Yi Gil-Yeong shouted out, still oblivious to the situation.

Yu Jung-Hyeok put the boy down as his expression hardened. "… Indeed, I should've killed them from the get-go."

In that moment, I figured out what was going on here.

Currently, I was the 'Sun Wukong', so it'd be possible for me to borrow

some of his powers. I stared at the waves of Yogoes rushing over here and strengthened my vision.

[Stigma, 'Fiery Golden Eyes Lv. ???' is activating!]

The 'Fiery Golden Eyes'. The Great Sage's unique Stigma that allowed him to discern Yogoes and demons.

The colour of the world gradually changed, and the appearance of the humans rushing over here transformed. Twisted figured emerged, their eyes filled to the brim with murderous intentions. As expected, they were not human beings.

"Zhu Bajie is not our enemy."

Yi Gil-Yeong's eyes went extra-round after he heard me. He even looked disappointed for some reason. "Whaaat? Dang it…"

"Rather than ruling the village, Zhu Bajie has liberated it, instead. It's those creatures that had been tormenting this village as they are not humans, but Yogoes that previously ruled this place."

The slave Yogoes finally revealed their true colours and unleashed their Status to destroy the village. Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung only then realised what had happened and began directing the crowd.

"Everyone, step behind us!"

…The revolt of the factory's slaves, was it?

This situation was the complete opposite of the [Demon World Revolution] in the past.

What we had to do now was not liberation, but suppression.

Yu Jung-Hyeok stepped forward first and unsheathed his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] from… No, hang on a second??

[A portion of the audience members are puzzled by Zhu Bajie's choice of weapon.]

[Several judges are curious as to why Zhu Bajie is suddenly using a 'blade' instead.]

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is complaining about the whereabouts of his 'Nine-Tooth Spike Rake'!]

According to the original story, Zhu Bajie didn't use a bladed weapon, but a rake called

[Nine-Tooth Spike-Rake].

[Many audience members are overwhelmed by the 'Conquering King Zhu Bajie's'

fighting spirit!]

[A portion of audience members are deeply arrested by the handsome Zhu Bajie's charms!]

[A portion of judges are accepting the change in weapons that reflect the current trend.]

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', coughs awkwardly and says that he'll overlook it this time as it looks cool.]

[5 additional points have been awarded!]

Dammit, were you implying that one's face could even serve as Probability?

Yu Jung-Hyeok stepped forward and suddenly brandished the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] in my direction, then drew a very tiny circle on the ground around my feet.

"You do not step beyond this line."

"Eh?"

"Move one step, and I'll kill you."

And then, Yogoes' necks began flying away next.

His sword technique on display was beautiful enough to entrance the viewers. His swordsmanship had taken yet another major leap forward when compared to before, making it impossible to imagine just how far he had to push himself to reach such a realm.

"You're doing okay, Pigsy!"

"Go get them!"

Even before I noticed it, both Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung were standing next to me and cheering on. We stood there and spectated on Yu Jung-Hyeok soloing the great army of Yogoes.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', feels happy about this pleasing and relaxing progression of the story.]

Only now did I finally understand the deeper meaning of Han Su-Yeong author-nim's firm resolution. Indeed, the story of the retired Sun Wukong was a pretty good one.

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is drunk on the coolness of himself.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is slightly dissatisfied by the cool-looking Zhu Bajie.]

[30 additional points have been acquired.]

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It was around this point in time that I heard a rather numinous voice resounding out from the skies above.

[Wait! Stop your actions!]

The half-dead Yogoes screamed loudly and began prostrating on the ground. The skies above the village opened up, and a Constellation kitted out in a Taoist robe made his entrance.

Judging from his attire, I was pretty sure that he was Taishang Laojun (the Grand Supreme Elderly Lord).

[Oh, Conquering King Zhu Bajie, those Yogoes you have slain are pigs that I reared back in my palace in Tushita. They escaped after fearing their fate of being served up on the heaven's dining table, so show them sympathy and allow me to take the surviving ones away.]

Yup, that pattern had finally shown up.

The entirety of the Journey to the West's plot unfolded in such a fashion. An event would occur, the culprit would be revealed as a Yogoe, and when it was about to be vanquished, some weird Taoist dude would suddenly pop up and say "Actually, that Yogoe is XX that I'd been rearing" before taking it away with him.

[A portion of judges are awarding extra points for the development that reflect the original work.]

[30 additional points have been added!]

Of course, there was no way I'd let such a development slide without saying something, what with my twisted disposition and all. "If you were planning to take them away anyway, why didn't you come and help the villagers from the beginning?"

[My apologies. I was somewhat occupied earlier…]

Nope, actually, you couldn't be bothered earlier.

Even in reality, countless Constellations of rarely tried to aid their Incarnations, just like now, when they had prior knowledge on what was going on in the scenarios.

"Take them away."

[Thank you.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok gave his permission, and Taishang Laojun ascended up to the sky along with his 'pigs'.

(Once Taishang Laojun took his pigs away, peace finally visited this rural village.) A normal story would've come to an end here.

But then, my [Fiery Golden Eyes] suddenly stung and the outer appearances of the Yogoes leaving alongside with Taishang Laojun wavered about greatly.

[…Don't want… go]

[…For how long…]

I heard the Yogoes' voices, their tone sounding eerily familiar. Even though they luckily avoided getting killed, none of them looked happy about it. How should I put this?

It was as if they wanted to die in this place, instead.

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"This village is now yours. Although you'll have to operate the factory by yourselves, you won't go empty-bellied like in the past."

With that, Yu Jung-Hyeok joined our little group.

The villagers held a tearful farewell party for us before we left. Or more specifically, they seemed to be disappointed not of us leaving, but due to Yu Jung-Hyeok going with us…

"Chet. I wanted to beat him up and then drag him away."

Once the party ended, Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung set off on the road again, and I followed after them as well. Meanwhile, Yu Jung-Hyeok was keeping a few steps of distance away from us.

What an awkward atmosphere this was.

Now that I thought about it, I had no clue what Yu Jung-Hyeok was like around my other companions when I wasn't around.

I ended up worrying about him and so, I had to say something. "Excuse me, Junior Brother. Why don't you walk closer to us?"

“…And who's your 'junior' now?"

That idiot glared back at me with incredibly intimidating eyes and I couldn't say anything else.

Meanwhile, the kids sidled up to my side and began chatting away in happiness.

"Hey, Demon King of Salvation, you did alright back there."

"If you haven't discovered the truth about those Yogoes back then, we might have ended up in a big disaster, disciple-nim."

To be honest, I hadn't done anything of note. Yu Jung-Hyeok killed Yogoes, and the one who saved the village was also him. All I did was spectate from the sidelines and say a couple of lines. Even then, kids were busy praising me, not him.

I glanced at him. As if he hadn't heard anything, he concentrated on polishing his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

「In that moment, Kim Dok-Ja began wondering for the first time ever. 'How did my companions see Yu Jung-Hyeok while I'm not around?」

Not too long afterwards, it became evening.

Gathered firewood burned brightly and we formed a small circle around the campfire to bathe in its warmth. It felt almost as if we were out camping.

It was Yu Jung-Hyeok who oh-so-suddenly decided to act like a wet blanket in this pleasant atmosphere.

"I shall act on my own from now on."

His voice sounded utterly disinterested, as if he was still polishing his damn sword, prompting me to respond unconsciously. "What do you mean by that?"

"Going to India and fetching the 'sacred texts' will end this journey, is it not? I alone will be sufficient for this task. I shall go there and…"

"You must not do that!"

Indeed, Zhu Bajie using his Cloud Riding technique, or even me utilising the Somersault Cloud, would reach India in the blink of an eye. For sure, Sun Wukong mentioned this fact back in the original story too, and when I was much younger, I also questioned the logic behind it as well.

「Why didn't Sun Wukong go and get the texts by himself?」

I now had a better understanding of why he didn't.

"If you do that, then there will be no meaning to this story."

Taking over fourteen years of slow crawling to cross the distance short enough to traverse in one night – that time existed for the sole purpose of completing the story that was the 'Journey to the West'.

However, Yu Jung-Hyeok's thoughts were different. "I don't have the time to waste here."

"This trip should not be that long. It'll definitely not take over 14 years for us, so please be patient. Progressing according to the itinerary while meeting the rest of our companions should prove to be a good experience for you."

He must've found it unexpected that I said those words, because he began staring at me while speaking up. "You are not one of my

companions."

Yup, of course.

There was no way that this deeply-suspicious-of-everyone Yu Jung-Hyeok would believe me.

"I know that."

Silence descended among the group.

Yi Gil-Yeong wordlessly tossed a pebble inside the campfire, while Shin Yu-Seung nervously studied Yu Jung-Hyeok's and my current moods, her fingers fidgeting around with the soil on the ground.

It was then we heard the sound of a stomach growling loudly. Yi Gil-Yeong frowned tearfully and rubbed his belly.

"I'm starving…"

I grinned slightly and pulled something out from my inner pocket. "Would you like some dumplings?"

It was my secret stash of dumplings that I made while walking on that 'Dumpling Road'.

Yi Gil-Yeong warily eyed me but still received a dumpling anyway. He eventually bit into it. His eyes opened up real wide, his irises trembling powerfully.

"What the heck?! This is so much tastier than what I ate back in the factory!"

Of course, it was tastier. It simply had to.

[A portion of the audience members are getting really curious about the taste of

'Murim dumplings'.]

I sensed Yu Jung-Hyeok [999] flinch ever so slightly on my shoulder.

In the meantime, I handed the dumplings over to Shin Yu-Seung and Yu Jung-Hyeok as well.

The latter frowned and shook his head. "I don't eat food made by other people."

"Other people didn't make this."

He seemed deeply puzzled by that. Most likely, he had no idea what I was talking about.

He then glared at the [Murim dumpling] resting before his eyes with some suspicion, but eventually made up his mind and cautiously reached out to it.

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And very slowly, so very slowly, as if he was studying his new enemy, brought the dumpling near his nose.

“…This aroma??"

That's right, eat that damn dumpling, you bastard.

Yu Jung-Hyeok continued his pained deliberation over and over again, and in the end, brought the dumpling towards his lips very slowly. As if he was tearing into the neck of the enemy commander, he took a small bite out of it.

Yi Gil-Yeoung, Shin Yu-Seung, and I tensely observed the sight of him chewing the dumpling. Even the chef [999] on my shoulder had stopped moving and waited for the dude's reaction.

Gulp.

Yu Jung-Hyeok finally finished swallowing his initial mouthful, then proceeded to take another bite. Very, very slowly, the frown on his forehead disappeared. His lips bobbed up and down in great haste.

The speed at which he consumed the dumpling increased. Second bite, third bite…

Eventually, his hand reached out to the second dumpling. But then, he flinched and stopped, and began glaring at me instead.

"What are you looking at?"

I sneakily averted my gaze and began chowing the dumplings as well.

…If I used the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] here, I might have heard something much more entertaining just now, but well, I swore not to use that anymore, so…

“…It's not that bad, I suppose."

I heard Yu Jung-Hyeok's nearly-inaudible muttering and quietly looked up at the sky.

The stars of the night sky sparkled as they looked down at us, as if the destruction of the world was a story belonging to a distant realm.

While chewing the dumpling, I began thinking this for the first time. That I wouldn't

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have minded this story going on for a little while longer.

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[Deep night has arrived.]

['Journey to the West Remake' System will enter one hour of maintenance.]

The darkness descending was pitch-black. Everyone had fallen asleep.

Sun Wukong used his arm as his pillow and began snoring away, and as for the pair of Tang Sanzangs, they used each of the Monkey King's legs as their own pillows to sleep as well. They must've been fatigued by the journey.

However, a shadow quietly stood up, utilising this dead of night where the messages from the audience members and the judges had disappeared temporarily.

It was Yu Jung-Hyeok.

He silently unsheathed [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and approached the sleeping Sun Wukong.

And very slowly, he pointed the tip of his blade against the sleeping figure.

Fin.

Yu Jung-Hyeok pointed the tip of his blade at Sun Wukong and slowly opened his lips.

- How did you expect me to respond when you were emitting that much demonic energy?

The [Voice Projection] was meant to send one's voice to a designated target. However, Sun Wukong didn't reply. Instead, it was the [Murim dumpling] on his shoulder that did.

- [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] is a good weapon.

That voice was thick with an untold length of time it had lived through, prompting Yu Jung-Hyeok to strengthen the sword aura permeating on his blade.

The dumpling spoke while opening its eyes to stare at the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] buzzing with the transcendental power.

- However, will you be able to cut me down with a broken weapon?

Indeed, there was a faint crack running in the middle of the sword.

By using the repair tools sold in the [Dokkaebi Bundle], it had been patched up somewhat, but as that statement implied, it was nothing more than a temporary measure. After it broke once, [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] couldn't even display half of its original might.

Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke.

- We can find out, right now.

- And that's precisely why you couldn't win against the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's dark brows quivered noticeably at the mention of the 'Secretive

Plotter'.

The outer appearance of the Murim dumpling seemed to slowly morph in the darkness, and the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] regained his former look.

Indeed, it was the miniaturised version of Yu Jung-Hyeok.

The regular-sized Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes trembled faintly.

- Are you an underling of that bastard? What is your goal here?

- The current you will never defeat the 'Secretive Plotter'.

- If you came here to pass on such a meaningless message, then…

- It'll be the same story even if you try your luck hundreds of times. Exactly the same as your pathetic repeated regressions. Surely, you must be aware of this by now.

The tip of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] trembled faintly as well.

Perhaps, that was true. Even after he borrowed Han Su-Yeong and Jeong Hui-Won's powers, he still failed to defeat that enemy. It was obvious that he'd not be a match even if they met again.

The kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok [999] spoke in the tone of voice indicating that he understood that feeling.

- Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 3rd turn. How much do you know about the 'Secretive Plotter'?

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An ancient slumber.

This dream was from the days when he was still called Yu Jung-Hyeok (Hanja: 劉衆赫

).

From 0th turn all the way up to 1863rd.

The story of when he was still the puppet of the Most Ancient Dream, repeating countless lives and fighting over and over again.

[…Oh, you foolish puppet. You, can't, save, anything.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok finally reached the 1863rd turn, only to lose every single one of his comrades.

The Maritime War God, Yi Ji-Hye.

The Beast Lord, Shin Yu-Seung.

The Emperor of Steelsword, Yi Hyeon-Seong.

The God of Medicine, Yi Seol-Hwa.

The Demon of Delusions, Kim Nam-Wun.

The Hermit King of Shadows, Han Dong-Hoon.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, Namgung Min-Yeong.

…His little sister, Yu Mi-Ah.

Just like how he had many comrades, he also had as many enemies to contend with.

Such as, 'Ten Evil' Gong Pil-Du, Anna Croft, Ranveer Khan, Fei Hu…

"I told you, I won't become your ally. However…"

Some enemies remained hostile until the end.

"Maybe, this regression turn will be your last."

Some enemies realised he had succeeded and congratulated him.

And then, the final war began.

[Oh, the 'Iron Blood Conquering King'.]

Fighting alongside him as his sworn friend, the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', the Great Sage, Equal of Heaven.

[I'm helping you because the is an even greater evil.]

Working as his ally at the final hurdle, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', Uriel.

[…This one is simply avenging the death of his Incarnation, that is all.]

Standing on his side for the sake of avenging Kim Nam-Wun, the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.

[Y ou fool ish Con stell ations…]

They advanced forward while breaking past the waves of the Outer Gods. They cut down countless packs of tentacles rushing at them, and faced off against the enormous Statuses emitted by these gods from the other world.

Stars in the sky fell non-stop.

Lights from the great Nebulas continued to disappear. , , …

Along with the noises of one era coming to an end, the skies of the were covered by the falling rain of shooting stars.

The Korean Peninsula's Constellations also died. The Goryeo's number one swordsman and the Maritime Wargod fought bitterly right till the end, but they still couldn't avoid their deaths.

It was the same story for Yu Jung-Hyeok's comrade in arms.

[What an amusing life it was.]

The first one to lose his head was the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.

[…Gabriel… I'm sorry.]

Not too long after, the wings of the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' were broken.

By that time, however, even the majority of 'Outer Gods' had perished as well.

The one to land the final, deciding blow was the Great Sage.

[That's the end of all stories, it seems.]

His Ruyi Bang grew to an enormous height. He then dispersed into tens of thousands of clones and utilised every single Fable he possessed to open up a path. As he scattered away in a golden-coloured Fable, the Great Sage spoke up.

[Complete your story, Conquering King Yu Jung-Hyeok.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok could never forget the moment he ran on that path.

It was the moment that his life, continued on breathlessly from the 0th turn up until now, was about to be completed.

Slice.

The head of a god from another world fell in vain.

[Reg ret will be the on ly th ing that ke eps you al ive.]

And that curse completed Yu Jung-Hyeok's 'Conclusion'.

[You have acquired a new Great Fable!]

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonesome Apocalypse', has completed its meaning!]

[The 'Conclusion(結)' for your final Great Fable has been completed!]

[Hidden Scenario – 'A Single Fable's' final condition has been met!]

The only one remaining on the battlefield where everything had perished was Yu Jung-Hyeok.

The Conclusion he finally reached by using the deaths of everyone as its fertiliser.

What he wished for at the end of this lengthy fight was just this one thing.

'To see the end of this damn regression.'

For that sole purpose, he persisted and got himself here.

Unfortunately, a wall prevented him from 'going beyond'.

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「There are three methods to survive in a destroyed world. I've forgotten some of them by now. However, one thing is for certain. The one reading these words, you, will survive for sure.」

Incomprehensible texts were written on that wall.

That was where Yu Jung-Hyeok met the 'Dokkaebi King'.

[Oh hear ye, the poor, tragic puppet. You have come far too quickly. I'm sorry, but past here 'doesn't exist' yet.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't understand what that meant. To figure it out, he threatened the 'Dokkaebi King'. But the damn guy didn't reveal its true meaning even as it died.

[You can't complete this universe.]

It was a gigantic wall that Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't go past with his power. But he still instinctively understood it.

'Past this wall is where I'll find the answer I've been looking for.'

Unfortunately, his [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] that shattered the heavens and destroyed stars failed to break this wall. It was as if this wall didn't possess the nature of 'breaking' in the first place.

Yu Jung-Hyeok despaired.

He came this far while losing everything, yet he couldn't go past this

one wall?

[Your 'Conclusion' is guiding you towards a brand new existence.]

He needed to become stronger.

He needed many more Fables.

He needed the force capable enough to break past this 'Wall' and go beyond it.

[You have become an 'Outer God'.]

And that was why Yu Jung-Hyeok had become an Outer God.

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He now could drift along the countless world-lines he had lived through, and eventually, he was no longer 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.

Other gods respected him who wandered among the universe of stories, and Dokkaebis from other world-lines feared him.

The Wennys liked him, though. One of the Recorders of Fear even created a title for him, too.

- The great schemer who dreams of journeying past the Wall… The 'Secretive Plotter'.

0th regression turn, 1st, 2nd… 1863rd.

He aimlessly floated around all these numerous world-lines and memorised the stories of his life once more.

He had earned many Fables along the way, but his overall power remained the same after paying for the Probability of traversing through different world-lines. However, he got to learn many new pieces of information that he failed to notice when he used to rely on regression only.

Such as, the origin of all of his regressions, his sponsor.

The 'Most Ancient Dream'.

The 'Secretive Plotter' wandered around again and again for the sole purpose of finding this being.

Once, he discovered its traces in , and he also discovered the records of it within as well.

But he couldn't find its actual, real body anywhere.

And that was why the 'Secretive Plotter' became even more convinced. He was sure that the answer to everything was beyond the 'Final Wall' he encountered at the 'Final Scenario'.

Sadly, though, he failed to discover the method to breach that wall even after searching through all of the world-lines.

His hope slowly withered. His will that not even regressing for 1863 times could break was slowly becoming dimmer. He dreamed many times of falling into an endless slumber. If only he really could.

If only he could find… the eternal rest he'd been searching for.

It was at this point that he discovered a single planet shining so brightly. The 'Secretive Plotter' was quite familiar with it.

The 8612th solar system, Earth. The location where the tragedies of all scenarios began.

However, something was wrong. An unfamiliar sensation wrapped around this worldline stabbed into his memories.

‘…Was there a regression turn like this one?'

And it was here that the 'Secretive Plotter' witnessed an existence he

had never encountered before.

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……

The 'Secretive Plotter' slowly opened his eyes.

He saw the N'Gai's Forest above the cold darkness. His jet-black exhaled air dispersed within the now-chilly air.

It was unknown for how long he was there, but nonetheless, the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeok number [41] was next to him.

"You had a nightmare. Someone like you who had witnessed the Conclusion still can't escape from dreaming, it seems."

[[… Well, I too am nothing more than a mere 'puppet', that's why.]]

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…

Perhaps as the after-effects of spending an exorbitant amount of Probability, thin layers of sparks danced around the entire figure of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[41] quietly observed that phenomenon for a while before opening his lips. "I see that the effects from the 1863rd's story changing is rather considerable."

[[… Your business here?]]

"All contact from [999] has been cut off."

The irises of the 'Secretive Plotter' drew in deeper after hearing those words. Dark and deep light flitted in and out of his eyes as if he was reading something, before he opened his lips again.

[[… [999] hasn't died.]]

"Then, the meaning of his contact being cut off is…"

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply.

[41] spoke with a voice containing a faint trace of rage. "It was a mistake to send him.

Send me, instead. [999] is too soft."

[[He is not as soft as you think.]] Faint vestiges of a Fable brushed past the eyes of the Secretive Plotter as if he was re-reading the events of the 999th regression turn. [[Even if it was through sheer luck, [999] is the only one besides myself to reach the edge of the 'Conclusion'. Because of his experience, I too was able to witness my 'Conclusion', as well.]]

That reply prompted [41]'s expression to crumple. "However, he's also the one who willingly gave up on the 'Conclusion'. Think about this. He can mess up our goal."

[[It doesn't matter. He is also a 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', after all.]] The Plotter's unfathomable eyes now stared at the skies of the N'Gai's Forest. No one could tell what exactly he was thinking about. [[He too, has the right to pursue the end he wishes to see.]]

[41] quietly observed the Plotter's eyes before lowering his head slowly.

The 'Secretive Plotter'. Yu Jung-Hyeok who had lived the longest time in all of the universes out there. No one in the could understand the depths of his

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sorrow.

"…If that's what you want."

Even if it was another Yu Jung-Hyeok.

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[Scenario maintenance will conclude in five minutes.]

[The channel will re-open soon.]

As the message reverberated throughout the empty air, two Yu Jung-Hyeoks were still standing face to face. [999] was the first one to form a wry grin.

- It seems that you don't know anything. But then again, I guess it's only obvious.

"Don't know anything" – those words really got under Yu Jung-Hyeok's skin. This bastard or that other one, they were all saying the same damn thing.

'Yu Jung-Hyeok who doesn't know anything'.

Just what the hell didn't he know?

The blade of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] faintly shifted over to Sun Wukong as if he had managed to swallow back his anger.

- Just spit out what you're plotting here. Why did you come? Is this Sun Wukong one of your collaborators?

[999] glanced at Sun Wukong after hearing that threat, and replied.

- He isn't an Outer God. We're simply using each other.

- In that case, it'll be fine to kill you both.

[999] then stepped up slightly as if to defend Sun Wukong and spoke.

- If you wish to give up on this regression turn, then go ahead.

- What rubbish are you talking about?

- Complete this 'Journey to the West Remake' with this guy. If you do, I shall teach you a way to defeat the 'Secretive Plotter'.

- Why should I believe…

Almost at the same time, blue sparks danced around [999]'s body.

The [Existence Pledge].

Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes trembled from unrest.

- You said that I'll never defeat him even if I regress hundreds of times.

- And I merely meant that you can't defeat him by 'regressing' hundreds of times.

[999] lightly leaped up and landed on the blade of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

Yu Jung-Hyeok reflexively took a step back, but his mini version approached him regardless.

- You always thought that your life so far has been a living hell. Because, you've been dealing with everything all on your own.

A chaotic Fable instantly spread all around. Yu Jung-Hyeok flinched and stared at it.

It was of an eternal nightmare that a certain someone had lived through.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling.]

As if it was reacting to this Fable, the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] permeating with shining light shuddered greatly.

Yu Jung-Hyeok who experienced the 999th regression turn spoke again.

- How many such hells do you think exist in this world?

Fin.

The ensuing scenario afterwards proved to be plain sailing. Zhu Bajie had a big role to play in that.

[Current rate of Journey to the West's progress: 24%]

The Journey to the West had the storyline of overcoming a total of 81 different adversities in the 14-year period. But, as the original work used the stories passed down orally as its foundation, this level of changes didn't seem to matter one jot.

Even then, I couldn't help but wonder if the story was progressing a bit too fast when we hadn't even met Sha Wujing yet. And I also kind of wondered who'd play that role, too.

"Ku-waaahk!"

Currently, Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] was busy cutting the heads off the unlucky bandits that showed up as a sort of intermission event.

[A portion of judges are dissatisfied by the viciousness of 'Zhu Bajie'!]

[Audience members are satisfied with the taste of the Journey to the West's cider!]

[10 additional points have been acquired.]

Even back in the original story, Zhu Bajie and Sun Wukong often killed all human-type villains they came across. That resulted in 'Tang Sanzang' lecturing them, or when the matter became too serious, they even suffered expulsion, too.

There were quite a few readers who felt turned-off by the stuffy uptightness of Tang Sanzang, though.

"Jung-Hyeok ahjussi, how about sparing those people…?"

[A portion of judges are satisfied by the reflection of the original work.]

[Many audience members are arrested by Tang Sanzang's adorableness.]

[20 additional points have been acquired.]

For sure, the question of who was playing the role seemed to make a big difference overall.

The leader of the bandits, beaten up to within an inch of his life by Yu Jung-Hyeok, yelled out as if he was furious about his treatment. "Keu-euh-euk! Who would've thought that a mere Zhu Bajie was that strong!"

Surprisingly, he was someone that I knew.

Kids next to me whispered to each other.

"Poor Myeong-Oh ahjussi."

The department chief Han Myeong-Oh activated [One-legged Swift Horse] and while running away as if his butt was on fire, sent us a knowing wink.

To think that Han Myeong-Oh was one of the players participating

here, too.

It seemed that he was hired to perform multiple roles, specifically as leaders of various bandit troupes. Shin Yu-Seung softly muttered as we watched his distancing back.

"Hui-Won unni said that it was okay."

Yu Jung-Hyeok returned to our side while lightly polishing the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. He especially paid more attention to the centre of the blade. When I took a closer look, a minute crack could be spotted there.

His sword was broken on the battlefield of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

This would be his second sword to be broken after the [Heaven Shaking Sword]. Even if he didn't show it, he must've been hurting over this whole thing.

It'd be good if he could get himself a new weapon from this 'Journey to the West'…

But, I couldn't recall any weapons that might suit him. Sun Wukong's Ruyi Jingu Bang

wasn't the type of weapon that Yu Jung-Hyeok was familiar with, and Zhu Bajie's Nine-Tooth Spike Rake didn't match his taste. No need to even mention Sha Wujing's Demon Slaying Staff, either…

Maybe he found me, deeply submerged in my thoughts, suspicious, as he suddenly addressed me off-handedly. "Thankfully, you behaved yourself."

(Interpretation: Senior brother! Are you injured anywhere?) I couldn't help but glare at the narration floating up in the air.

What the heck was that now?

"Behave yourself even in the future. Then I won't kill you."

(Interpretation: Fufufu, Senior Brother, do not worry. Even if I have to sacrifice my life, I shall definitely protect you.)

I became slightly dismayed and glared at the sky.

Hey, there's just no way he'd be thinking like that. Besides, Yu Jung-Hyeok would never laugh "Fufufu" in his life.

Han Su-Yeong, you dumbass…

[A fair number of audience members are greatly moved by Zhu Bajie's inner thoughts!]

[A fair number of audience members have fallen deeply for Zhu Bajie's magnetism!]

[One of the audience members wish to sponsor Coins.]

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is greatly satisfied!]

[50 additional points have been acquired!]

…What an outstanding author she was.

(The journey proved to be rather uneventful. Sun Wukong began thinking. Is this what it means to lead a 'retired life'?)

In any case, the trip was indeed quite stress-free, as long as I excluded the constant war of nerves with Yu Jung-Hyeok, that was.

As for Yogoes or bandits that periodically appeared, either the kids or Yu Jung-Hyeok took care of them even before I could spot them.

"Oii, Mister Demon King of Salvation. You must be really comfortable,

aren't you?"

"Yes. It's all thanks to you the Masters."

I should also thank Han Su-Yeong for me getting referred to as the 'Demon King of Salvation' even though my identity hadn't been revealed yet.

This [I've become the retired SSSSS-rank Sun Wukong] had a strange backstory of Sun Wukong being nicknamed the 'Demon King of Salvation' in his past. I couldn't really figure out why she'd use such a nickname here…

[A portion of audience members like the story where the 'Demon King of Salvation' is treated poorly.]

[10 additional points have been acquired.]

…Nope, I think I know now.

"Stop picking a fight with someone you're not familiar with, you dummy."

"No, that's not it. I mean, he should earn his keep, right? Dok-Ja hyung told me that even if your body's relaxing, your head should still be working overtime."

I definitely never said that. When you were relaxing, you should relax your mind, too.

Yi Gil-Yeong narrowed his eyes to a slit and stared at me while adding a few more words on top. "That's why you should give up some tasty info already. I mean, you're supposed to be a second-turn Sun Wukong according to the backstory, right? Don't you know where we can find some hidden elixirs or something?"

“…Mm. Sure, I know of a few."

Indeed, the 'Journey to the West' did feature quite a few useful elixirs. Such as, the

[Peach of Immortality] that Sun Wukong ate, or the [Ginseng Fruit] the group finds

during the journey itself.

"One of the best elixirs can be found nearby."

"Really? Where?"

I didn't reply and simply stared at Yi Gil-Yeong.

"Where is it? Hurry up and spit it out!"

Before I could explain, the narration began first.

(In the original Journey to the West, Tang Sanzang was kidnapped by Yogoes dozens of times because of the legend that any creature devouring the monk would ascend to the heavenly world. But that made sense, considering that Tang Sanzang was the reincarnation of Golden Cicada, the disciple of Buddha who had gone through ten cycles of rebirth.)

While watching the jaws of the two kids drop gradually, I added an extra explanation on top. "Most likely, you Masters are the best-known elixirs found within the entirety of the 'Journey to the West'."

Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung flinched before taking quick steps away from one another, and glared fiercely at each other.

"Hey, Shin Yu-Seung, you don't need a finger or two, now do you…?"

"You probably don't need anything above your neck, though?"

Watching the kids growl at each other like that, I couldn't help but snicker on the side.

The dumpling on my shoulder didn't seem to be happy with my current actions and whispered to me.

- This is no time to snicker like a fool. It's you who needs an elixir or two, not them.

Along with his rebuke, a window popped up in my view.

[Outer God transformation progress percentage: 48%]

…The rate of assimilation was chill-inducingly fast. I didn't expect this one to be

quicker than the Journey to the West's progress.

- It's because your Incarnation Body's rate of recovery is too slow.

'…This was not a part of the deal.'

- And you sneakily cooperating with was not a part of the plan, either.

I bit my lip.

As expected, the Wenny King was a scary guy. But then again, he had been fighting the Dokkaebi King for his entire life, hadn't he? It was highly likely that he even foresaw the current situation.

[999] spoke as he studied my Incarnation Body.

- You only have around four days. You need to fulfil the agreement before then.

'That's impossible. I need to finish this scenario first in order to do that, but I don't have enough time.'

The deal with the Wenny King was to create a Great Fable that contained an 'Outer God'. I was planning to fulfil that agreement through this Great Fable, but four days simply was too short.

At the bare minimum, I needed over a week.

- In that case, there is only one method remaining. We need to strengthen your frail Incarnation Body.

I nodded my head and checked out my body's condition.

[Current Incarnation Body recovery rate: 45%]

[Damage to your foundational Fable is critical.]

[You can consume a new type of elixir to boost the rate of recovery.]

The reason for the rate of transforming into an Outer God speeding up was simply

because my Incarnation Body hadn't recovered fully from the damage I suffered during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

[Fable fragment, 'Young Gold Dragon's Broken Heart', is unable to function properly.]

Now that I thought about it, I was too focused on gathering Fables and neglected on enhancing my Incarnation Body's durability. Well, I half gave up on the idea after I kept dying and stuff, so… As for the 'Young Gold Dragon's Broken Heart', now that was a Fable fragment I acquired a really long time ago.

Just like what the 'One Invincible Fist' Yu Ho-Seong told me, though, I needed to train my Incarnation Body if I wanted to bring out the full might of the Fables.

Because, if Fables were 'words', then one's Incarnation Body was the 'paper' those words could be written on.

- Every elixir that can be found in here should all be replicas. Still, it'll be better than not consuming one.

[Score: 2963]

[Currently, five judges are watching the applicable Fable chamber.]

[Currently, many audience members are interested in the upward trajectory of the Fable chamber.]

[Current ranking of the applicable Fable chamber is 31st.]

In a fairly short period of time, the scenario created by Han Su-Yeong managed to earn the support from many people out there. And a story where many were sharing the cost of 'Probability' could exhibit pretty strong power as a result.

[As the Fable chamber's ranking rises higher, the grades of Star Relics found within the applicable chamber will also rise up.]

As the chamber's ranking climbed up, every item that showed up here would get closer and closer to the grade of their original counterparts, and if we manage to win, then they would become originals outright.

In other words, everything we find in this Fable chamber would become 'real' things.

If our chamber's ranking continues to climb as smoothly as it had done so far, and if I manage to successfully gather the elixirs, then…

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is currently asleep.]

[You don't have the qualification to use the applicable Fable.]

…Then maybe, I might get to utilise the power of this 'Great Fable' that I earned but hadn't been able to unleash until now.

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is afraid of 'Season of Light and Darkness'.]

Even the [Torch that Swallowed the Myth] was scared of this Fable. Right now, I couldn't even begin to imagine how incredible the power of this Fable was.

"Stop."

It was at that moment when Yu Jung-Hyeok walking out in front came

to a stop.

The sky that used to be clear and blue was now dyed in a yellowish hue. I took a closer look to find that the yellowish fog had blanketed the surrounding landscape as well as the sky above.

[You have arrived in Yellow Wind Cave at Yellow Wind Ridge.]

Yellow Wind Ridge, was it?

This was the residence of one of the Journey's villains, 'Yellow Wind' Demon King. If my thoughts were correct, then one of the elixirs I need should be found nearby.

It was here that we heard an incoming message.

[High number of Players are joining this 'Fable chamber'!]

The original number of Players for this chamber was eight. However, there was a sudden influx of additional Players.

Yi Gil-Yeong muttered as if he was dumbfounded by it. "… But, why now?"

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It was logically difficult to explain. The newly-entering Players to a Fable chamber that no longer recruited roles could only become 'extras' and not much else. And these extras would not get any proper rewards even after the chamber was concluded successfully.

That was the situation for the top-ten ranked Fable chambers, so there was no need to even mention participating in this 31st… No, hang on, there was.

[A small number of audience members are wary of the 6731st Fable chamber's rise in the rankings.]

[A portion of audience members are looking forward to your

destruction.]

[Many audience members are paying attention to the Fable chamber's sudden upheaval!]

The current situation was this: our Fable chamber had shot up from the bottom of the ranking all the way up near the top in a proverbial blink of an eye.

Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke, his expression hardening. "Bastards are trying to ruin our scenario."

It was unknown who might be the instigator in this case, but I could think of something.

Most likely, these guys were 'spies' sent in from the great Nebulas participating in the

'Journey to the West Remake', as well as from other top-ranked Fable chambers.

They must've been fearing what might happen in the if managed to snatch away yet another 'Great Fable' here.

Ku-gugugugu!

The fog rushed forward in an instant and swallowed us up.

The first one to disappear under the fog was Yu Jung-Hyeok's figure, looking back at us and issuing a warning; and then, the surprised voices of Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong resounded out next.

"Disciple-nim! Hurry and hide behind us!"

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"Stay behind and don't step forward! Got th…”

Even before I could make my reply, the kids disappeared as well. And

the fog came to a stop right before my nose. Soon, I heard the sharp noises of weapons clashing coming from here and there. The dumpling on my shoulder asked in a quiet voice.

- Aren't you going in?

"I want to, but…" said I, as I felt the presence approaching me from behind. "… I think their aim is me this time."

I looked back and saw the 'extras' hurrying over here on the Yellow Wind Ridge's pathway. Constellations disguised as the underlings of the 'Yellow Wind' Demon King were walking closer while emitting unfriendly auras in my direction.

"So, that's the 'Sun Wukong'?"

"He must be a weakling, judging from his Status."

"Did they really think we'd be scared by them attaching the 'Demon King of Salvation'

moniker onto a weakling like him?"

Only then did I figure out what their real goal was. No matter what, the main protagonist of the [Journey to the West] was 'Sun Wukong'. If he dies, the Journey would end, too.

[A portion of judges are worried about your safety.]

[A portion of audience members are worried about your safety.]

I watched the Constellations come closer and felt really conflicted about this whole thing.

(Retired Sun Wukong didn't want to fight. Why? Because it was annoying.)

['Retirement penalty' has steeply decreased your will to fight.]

Yup, it was all because of that damn 'retired' setting.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is digging his ear as if he can't be bothered.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is opening a book to read with a refined expression.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is yawning out in boredom.]

Those 'Sun Wukongs', feeling sick and tired of hard-carrying the [Journey to the West]

by themselves originally, wouldn't enjoy this type of development at all. Utterly not caring about that, the 'extra' Constellations wielding scary-looking weapons finally arrived in my near vicinity.

"Kill him!"

(Interpretation: Hahat, kill that baldy monkey.)

"Kill him!"

(Interpretation: Fuc■! It's the bastar■ that cleans up the poo of the heavens.)

"Kill him!"

(Interpretation: A roc■-for-brains monkey.)

I was about to throw a tackle, arguing about the validity of such interpretations, but then, the channel was suddenly flooded with an explosion of messages.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is enraged while holding onto his hair!]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is shuddering angrily at the filthiness of this story.]

[Judge, Meihouwang', wishes for the heads of those fools to roll.]

[A portion of judges are providing a great amount of Probability towards the progression of the applicable Fable chamber!]

[If this story's direction is changed, then a large amount of additional points will be acquired.]

…Ehng?

[A private message has arrived from the Scenario Master.]

["Hey, you said you can fight a bit, right?"]

The narration began even before I had time to reply.

(There was one thing that all these Yogoes rushing in didn't know. Without a doubt, he was the 'retired Sun Wunkong'. However…)

(…He was also Sun Wukong that didn't hide his own strength, either.) Along with all the messages clogging up my view, the title card for the new episode floated up as well.

~ Episode 3. The Demon King of Salvation isn't hiding his powers ~

Fin.

The Constellations rushing in flinched after checking out the title card floating in the air.

“…What's up with this episode? He's 'not hiding his powers'? What?"

"Never mind that and just kill him!"

I sighed out grandly while looking at all those weapons brandished at me.

…That damn Han Su-Yeong.

I began wondering if this was how every character felt inside.

Characters that had to follow along with the plot that the author had cooked up, and had no choice but to overcome the obstacles set before them. Yu Jung-Hyeok had overcome such trials and tribulations for tens of thousands of years.

If I had one advantage over him, then that would be me knowing who the author of this particular scenario was.

Swiiiiiish!

Two strands of sword auras tore apart right before my eyes. I easily avoided the attacks with airy footsteps and thought to myself.

I had a chat with Han Su-Yeong in the past about a certain something.

- There are two types of writers in the world. One, a diligent type of writer who plots everything out in advance. And then, the genius beautiful girl writer who entrusts herself to the feelings of the moment without relying on prior planning.

- Oh? And which one are you?"

.

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- Hey you dumbass. You asking me because you really can't tell?

So, then. That genius author-nim had written this very scenario, did she?

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is readying some beer.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is readying some drip coffee.]

So, you want to abuse me a bit for the sake of satisfying the tastes of the main

'readership', was that it? I stared at the sky and muttered out. "Hey, listen. You know that this is a trade, don't you?"

[Scenario Master is tilting her head after hearing your words.]

Even if that was her 'reaction', Han Su-Yeong should've realised what I was talking about here. In the meantime, the Constellations had me surrounded.

"You came riding on a bus this far, so it's time that you make your exit."

Making an exit… Now, where would these idiots learn such a scary phrase from? "We'll have to wait and see who will make their exit first, now don't we?"

I couldn't activate either the [Lightning Transformation] or [Way of the Wind]. Not only that, I couldn't use my usual [Unbreakable Faith], either.

After all, it'd be troublesome to let others know that I was 'Kim Dok-Ja'. Still, there was no need to utilise my main attack options when dealing with these low-levelled mobs right now.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut…

Because, I was none other than 'Sun Wukong'.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is nodding his head.]

[You've been permitted to use a portion of 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband's'

Stigmas.]

If I was a regular Constellation, dealing with such a Stigma would've been a tall order.

However, I was a 'Fable-grade Constellation', and possessed three different 'Great

Fables', to boot.

Ku-gugugugu!!

This time, the onomatopoeia was not made by someone's mouth but from actual thunders cracking in the sky for real. As the lightning bolts flashed in the air, I yanked out a handful of hair and blew them into the air.

[Stigma, 'Body Outside Body Magic', is activating!]

The 'Body Outside Body' technique.

Simply put, it was Sun Wukong's version of the skill [Avatar].

"W-what is this?!"

"Kuwaaahk!"

The clone Sun Wukongs proliferated in the blink of an eye and began pummelling the enemy Constellations to pulps. Suddenly, narration speech bubbles floated up above the heads of the clones rushing forward.

("The Demon King of Salvation!")

("Isn't hiding!")

("His powers!")

It seemed that she had momentarily forgotten that she was the narrator here.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchu…

I only borrowed the power of a single magic skill, yet the condition of my body worsened noticeably. It was exacerbated by the fact that I was gravely injured already.

…Goddammit, why hasn't Yu Jung-Hyeok come out of the fog yet?

[Your Incarnation Body's recovery is being delayed!]

[Condition of your Incarnation Body is worsening!]

I gazed at the murky interior of the fog and pretended to be unconcerned. The retired Sun Wukong needed to look strong, no questions asked. And I must never go all out, no matter what.

「Kim Dok-Ja thought to himself. 'I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok.'」

I bit my lips and formed the expression similar to the coolest person that I knew.

"Screw this… We're retreating!"

It seemed that my ploy worked, as the Constellations began retreating from the perceived threats to their lives.

[A great number of Players are exiting the scenario!]

In the blink of an eye, the only things remaining around me were the empty husks that the Constellations left behind.

"Euh, euh…"

However, even these husks possessed egos. They were creatures tasked with acting as Yogoe 'extras' in this world.

Suddenly, my heart began beating irregularly.

[Chaos is writhing within in your heart.]

[Rate of Outer God transformation is accelerating.]

[Stigma, 'Fiery Golden Eyes Lv.???', has been forcibly activated!]

As my vision burned in the crimson hue, the collapsed Yogoes revealed their true appearances.

[WhereisthisWhereisthisWhereisthis]

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[AgainAgainAgainAgainAgain]

Yogoes carrying suffering expressions had their heads shoved against the ground while screaming out. It wasn't that difficult to understand why. I had witnessed similar existences to them on the 'Isle of Reincarnators' already.

They were creatures mobilised to fill up the 'lacking Probability' in the Fable chambers of this [Journey to the West Remake]. Expendables, cursed to eternally repeat the life of being used as extras of other stories.

The problem here was, what was the 'real identity' of those creatures?

[Power of Chaos is writhing within your heart!]

Pain welled up in my chest like vomit.

I staggered unsteadily and approached one of the Yogoes. The moment my hand touched its slick body, its appearance changed.

To that of a tentacled cephalopod-type monster.

Pages of the 'Ways of Survival' flipped open in my head.

「Some Nebulas deliberately nurture the cast-off skins of the lower-ranked 'Old Beings'.」

「They use these beings as sacrifices to fill up the necessary Probability of the scenarios.」

My heart was beating much louder than before. Indeed, such sections did appear in the 'Ways of Survival'. However, it never revealed which 'Nebulas' did such things even until the end…

It can't be, it was the ?

[Pilgrim Sun, stop right there!]

I looked up into the sky and sure enough, one of the Constellations in charge of the heavenly worlds was busy making his descent. I wasn't sure of his name. Probably some loser like Metal Lord of the West or Lingji Bodhisattva or something. Well, there were literally hundreds of Constellations with similar names like that in the

, after all.

[Those Yogoes are beasts that used to cultivate at the foot of Yeongchi Mountain!

However, they stole and drank the sacred oils from the Great Leiyin Temple where Buddha was residing and became Yogoes as a result. Please, show them mercy and graciously pardon them of their sins and hand them over to…]

After realising the truth, I finally understood why folks wanted to retrieve these so-called Yogoes. From their perspective, these creatures must be like their resources.

A must-have resource in order to operate the scenarios.

[A portion of judges are satisfied by the story's reflection of the original work.]

[5 additional points have been awarded.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is yawning in boredom.]

The defeated Yogoes either dying or reverting back to the property of the deities. That development, without a doubt, truly reflected what happened in the original work, something that hadn't changed in the past thousands of years.

However, if that was the correct flow of events and the correct rules of the [Journey to the West], then…

[WhoamIWhoamIWhoamIWhoamI]

…Then, what meaning was there to the lives of these Yogoes?

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is looking at you in puzzlement.]

When I didn't say anything for a while, the Lingji Bodhisattva opened his mouth once more. [Hmm, hmm. In any case… It is fine for me to take the Yogoes away, yes?]

In the end, the narration decided to step in first.

(Sun Wukong nodded his head and towards the Lingji Bodhisattva…)

"I can't let you do that."

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(…Said that he can't allow that.)

I sensed the angry gaze of the Scenario Master bearing down on me from the sky. It was a reproachful gaze, seemingly asking me what I was thinking of when making such a reply.

The Lingji Bodhisattva was stunned just as much as she was, it seemed. [… What did you say?]

"Whatever the case may be, you people don't look after these guys

properly anyway."

[W-what are you talking about?]

"You'll just mobilise these Yogoes as extras in other Fable chambers."

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is looking at you with deeply intrigued eyes.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', has closed the book he was reading and is now looking at you.]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is paying attention to your words.]

The panicking Lingji Bodhisattva yelled out loudly. [They are nothing more than simple Yogoes. You're chasing after a greater purpose in this journey, so why are you minding the fate of these worthless creatures?]

"They are folks who also carry out the 'scenarios' as well. You're supposed to pursue Buddha's teachings or discuss the true meaning of the universe and be on the righteous path, so how come you're so disinterested in the lives of those that are not human?"

While saying such things, I began thinking about Han Su-Yeong. Did she already plan out the 'conclusion' of this scenario?

[Many audience members are intrigued by your argument.]

Just like what Han Su-Yeong said earlier with her own mouth, she was the so-called

'genius-type' writer who relied on the feelings of the moments to create the overall narrative. But that also meant she'd suffer the torture of creation, always wary of the potential responses the readers might display.

[Scenario Master is waiting for your next declaration.]

She probably had to participate in this scenario in a hurry and didn't enjoy the luxury of time to come up with a satisfying conclusion nor to establish an overarching theme.

Indeed, it'd be already pretty tough to create storylines that would constantly excite the audience members.

But, what if I aided her in her quest?

I slowly got up and, while standing in front of the Yogoes, raised my voice. "I shall take these guys with me."

As the Lingji Bodhisattva's expression was filling up with pure astonishment, I could also see the Yogoes falling into confusion as well.

There were some things that could only be seen from the perspectives of a writer or the reader, and some that could only be understood by being one of the main characters.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', likes your unwillingness to concede defeat.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', likes your unwillingness to concede defeat.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', likes your unwillingness to concede defeat.]

[150 additional points have been acquired!]

[The theme of the applicable Fable chamber is beginning to change greatly!]

Yogoes were now looking up at me.

[A possibility of a new 'Great Fable' is germinating!]

[Shares for 'Outer God' has been generated for the new 'Great Fable'!]

…As I expected. However, the messages didn't end there.

[The agreement with the Wenny King is activating!]

[In order to fulfil the agreement, you need to increase the shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable Fable to over 30%.]

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 0.0003%.]

…0.0003%???

As I began despairing at that nonsensical percentage, the Lingji Bodhisattva began yelling again in mid-air. [You fool! You're truly boundlessly arrogant, aren't you! Do you think you're the real Pilgrim Sun or some such??]

This Bodhisattva must've forgotten about his role for a second there, because he began pouring out powerful Status at me. It was right after I had finished dealing with the Great Sage's Probability, so I no longer possessed enough energy to contend with that.

But, just before the waves of Status, fired like lightning bolts, could stab into me…

"Hey, you. Did you know that you sound exactly like Dok-Ja ahjussi?"

…Along with that voice, the lightning bolts split apart in the air.

I looked around and saw that the sandy fog had died down already. My companions were approaching me from the distance. And then, Yu Jung-Hyeok was standing before me as if to shield me. He glared at the sky, and pointed the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] scattering electrical energy at the opponent.

"I won't say this twice. Scram."

[Y-you bastards… This insult, I will definitely…]

The Lingji Bodhisattva sweated buckets out of sheer fright and quickly disappeared, leaving Yu Jung-Hyeok to look at me with an icy expression. His [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] was pointing at me next.

"Didn't I say I'll kill you if you don't behave yourself?"

"Uh… My apologies."

"I've defeated the 'Yellow Wind' Demon King."

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“…Congratulations."

I began aiding the Yogoes still collapsed on the ground.

[WhoareyouWhoareyouWhoareyou]

They stared at me in fear, but eventually came closer and sniffed my hands. However, they still scampered away in a hurry. Like some sort of abandoned puppies, they hid behind distant trees and began peeking around the corners at me from their hiding spots.

[A portion of abandoned Yogoes are now following you.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok addressed me. "You know that this is a meaningless action, right?"

"…”

"The Nebula will retrieve them once this Fable chamber is complete."

"I'm aware of that."

"Something like that has happened thousands of times to them. Your kindness means nothing to them."

"I'm also aware of that."

"They will perform the exact same roles in the exact same scenario in the future, and forget all about you. They won't be able to remember anything about you."

"Do the ones that can't remember anything…” I stared straight at Yu Jung-Hyeok and replied. "… also forget about their sorrow, too?"

His eyes staring back at me trembled powerfully. I remained still as he continued to shiver. Was it because we had already reached the 94th scenario? His face was covered with quite a few scars now.

"You…"

Before he could form a proper sentence, the kids arrived first. When I took a closer look, though, our companions had ballooned up by one.

"As expected of my Mast… N-no, hang on. You're the Senior Brother in this place, right?

In any case, you were so cool! What was that technique earlier? Please teach me that!"

Her energetic voice caused my heart to ache even before I noticed it.

Ah, I see. So, you were our 'Sha Wujing', then.

['Player 2' -nim has joined the group!]

"Hi~ Sun Wukong. Hey, you sure know how to run your mouth, don't you?"

Yi Ji-Hye, wearing a T-shirt with a large butterfly printed on it and chewing on bubblegum, lightly slapped me on the shoulder and extended her hand to me.

(And so, all the main actors of the [Journey to the West] have finally gathered.) I smiled faintly and extended my hand towards her. But then, my body suddenly collapsed as if the ground beneath my feet had disappeared.

"Uh? What's wrong with him?"

Yi Ji-Hye hurriedly supported my collapsing frame. As the faintest trace of demonic aura leaked out from my body, my vision grew dim

at the rate of knots.

[Your Incarnation Body has currently sustained great damage!]

[Rate of Outer God transformation is accelerating!]

[Outer God transformation progress percentage: 71%]

It seemed that there weren't that many days remaining in my happiness-filled journey.

*

「"I shall take these guys with me."」

Han Su-Yeong heard the words coming out of the display panel and her jaw dropped to the floor. Her lemon candy rolled around on the floor.

Yi Su-Gyeong happened to be tidying up the vicinity just then; she cautiously came

closer and asked. "Did something happen?"

Han Su-Yeong remained utterly stupefied until then, but her lips finally began bobbing up and down a little. "N-no, wait. That guy…”

She looked at the list of characters on the holographic display.

[Player 1, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' -nim, is playing the role of 'Zhu Bajie'.]

[Player 2, 'Yi Ji-Hye' -nim, is playing the role of 'Sha Wujing'.]

[Player 3, 'Yi Gil-Yeong' -nim, is playing the role of 'Tang Sanzang'.]

…

……

[Player 8, 'Watcher of the Light and Darkness' -nim, is playing the role of 'Sun Wukong'.]

She stared at that list for a very long time, then suddenly rubbed her eyes while tilting her head back.

How long passed by like that?

Han Su-Yeong let out "Ah, aaaah" noise, and started cackling away.

Yi Su-Gyeong cautiously asked her again. "… Are you Black Flame Dragon right now?"

"No, no. I'm Han Su-Yeong. Han Su-Yeong the moron, actually."

Han Su-Yeong opened her eyes, her cheeks flushed ever so slightly.

Holographic messages began rising up one after the other.

[The declaration made by the applicable individual is welcomed by many audience members.]

[A portion of judges are awarding additional points for 'twisting cliches'.]

[Current ranking of the applicable Fable chamber is 25th.]

"You arrogant schmuck. Who asked you for your help?"

Her fingertips pressing on the key panel for some reason looked more cheerful than before.

"Being number one is what I do best, you idiot."

Fin.

The bitterness akin to the broth you'd get by boiling red ginseng spread inside my mouth. I ended up unknowingly smacking my lips, prompting a familiar voice to enter my ears.

"Uh? Looks like he's coming around. Put this in, too."

Someone forcibly pried my eyelids open and dropped a substance similar to eye drops on my eyeballs, causing a really cold sensation to spread out and help me regain my wits in an instant.

[Due to consuming new types of elixirs, your Incarnation Body's recovery has accelerated.]

My vision was restored, and I found myself lying against the belly of a horse. The White Dragon Horse – Chimera Dragon – of Tang Sanzang neighed unhappily and glared at me.

"Oh, he's awake!"

I saw Yi Gil-Yeong's and Shin Yu-Seung's worry-filled faces brighten up. Yi Ji-Hye forcing my eyelids open was grinning as well.

"Hey, what will we do with you when you're too frail to ride on a bus?"

"Hmm, hmm. You're supposed to serve your Master, so it's no good for you to be this feeble, you know?"

The boy put his hands on his waists and fake coughed. I grinned bitterly and tried to prop my upper body up, and Shin Yu-Seung lent me a hand.

"Are you really alright? You fainted all of a sudden…"

"I'm feeling better, thanks to all of you. By the way, these elixirs…"

I looked at all the remnants of various elixirs around me. A few of them were unfamiliar, but there was also one that I did recognise.

It was the eye drops contained in a reddish bottle, called 'Three Flowers and Nine Fruits Sap' (三花九子膏), and was one of the treasures found within the Journey to the West that could be earned by defeating the Yellow Wind Demon King.

I was somewhat flustered by this and asked the kids. "… Did you use that on me?"

For a moment there, I thought I could see Yu Sang-Ah's face in Shin Yu-Seung's bright smile.

The 'Three Flowers and Nine Fruits Sap'. Just by putting some in your eye, it restored energy in your body and expanded your eyesight.

[A portion of judges are satisfied by this attempt at reflecting the

original work!]

[10 additional points have been awarded!]

Actually, it was Sun Wukong who ended up using the 'Three Flowers and Nine Fruits Sap' in the original storyline, too. However… to think, they willingly spent an item on me that they could've used on themselves. For some reason, I felt guilty about it.

I felt my right wrist getting numb so I took a look, only to see something rather horrifying happening there.

"You're just as weak as that bastard. What's the matter with your Incarnation Body?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok was holding my right wrist with enough force to pop it like a balloon while feeling for my pulse. Now that I thought about it, this guy possessed the next best medical skills after Yi Seol-Hwa in our group.

He scowled deeply as he continued to observe my condition. "Not a single blood vessel in your internal organs is intact. It's a miracle that you even managed to participate in this scenario."

“…Is that so."

"It's rare to see a Constellation ending up in such a situation. Are you being chased by someone?"

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I looked at him with a bit of surprise.

There was no way he'd ask me that out of concern, so… Seeing how he was firmly grasping the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] with his free hand from a while ago, I could more or less figure out what he was planning to do here.

"No, it's not like that. I was just in an urgent need for this 'Great Fable'

so I didn't have enough time to recover my Incarnation Body."

"I shall end you right away if you prove to be a burden to this group even for a second."

Yu Jung-Hyeok discarded my wrist like trash and stood up from the spot. "… We've wasted precious elixirs."

Yu Jung-Hyeok strode away and settled down on a nearby boulder to polish the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] again. It had been broken once before, so its durability must've fallen by a quite lot now.

Yi Ji-Hye, watching that, spoke to me. "My Master, no wait, my Senior Brother is really cool, isn't he? Even though he's saying that, he was the first person to recommend using elixirs on you."

…That Yu Jung-Hyeok did?

I couldn't understand no matter how hard I thought about it. Even if I was 'Kim DokJa' and not the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', he wouldn't have…

- He's not as cold-blooded as you think.

I heard the dumpling [999]'s voice quietly enter my ear.

「"Do you still believe that you can understand someone through just a few lines of text in a couple of chapters?"」

[999] told me that not too long ago.

He was right. Even though I knew his words were correct, I kept forgetting them over and over again.

One's life would always be greater than a story written about him.

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「Yu Jung-Hyeok was always behind his comrades.」

There were countless paragraphs in the 'Ways of Survival', but they couldn't fully explain the time lived by Yu Jung-Hyeok.

3rd turn, 4th, 5th… He always was looking at his comrades from a certain distance. He stood there and protected them, and faced off against their enemies.

「"Yu Jung-Hyeok, were you able to protect everything you wanted to protect?"」

Always, he failed to protect those he had to protect.

Even then, he remained in the same spot.

It was quite likely that I'd never get to fully understand the depths of his determination even if I died and woke up again.

Shin Yu-Seung walked over to Yu Jung-Hyeok polishing his blade.

"Jung-Hyeok-ahjussi."

He looked back at her with his trademark disinterested eyes, and her small hand pressed against his cheek. Upon closer inspection, a cream-type ointment was applied there.

“…What are you doing?"

"Be still or it'll get infected, you know. Ah, don't turn your head!"

"Even without applying things like this…”

As if he was some kind of a vicious wild beast currently being tickled, Yu Jung-Hyeok's expression became rather complicated.

It took a single person's name to stop him from shooting up from his spot and leave.

"Seol-Hwa unni asked me to do it, you see. She said that ahjussi wouldn't care about stuff like this so someone has to mind it for his sake."

Yi Seol-Hwa's name caused his shoulders to flinch rather grandly. He seemed to be

torn over his decision for a very long time, but then, settled back down on the boulder awkwardly. He loudly declared in a charismatic voice next. "Finish it in ten seconds or less."

Shin Yu-Seung giggled and nodded her head, and began rubbing the ointment all over him energetically. His lips continued to twitch but he didn't try to stop her.

The wounds on his body healed at a visible pace after her hands brushed past them.

As expected, Yi Seol-Hwa's remarkable ointment was something else, indeed. Back in the original story, the [Mass Production-type Maker] even imported her ointment and sold them as a cosmetic product, too. What was its name again? Was it 'Purest White Fable Cream' or something?

"Bubble, hiss…"

My ears caught the sounds of onomatopoeia for the first time in a while, so I looked to my side to see what was what, only to find Yi Gil-Yeong and his figuratively-blazing eyes there.

As if he suddenly developed cross-eyes, the boy began alternating his gaze between Yu Jung-Hyeok and Shin Yu-Seung rapidly.

…Oh-ho?

Eventually, he began striding towards where the duo was in a vigorous fashion as if he had made up his mind about something.

"Hey, Shin Yu-Seung!"

His calling prompted Yu Jung-Hyeok and Shin Yu-Seung to look back at him simultaneously. Yi Ji-Hye sidled up next to me and nodded her head, her expression one of contentment. "Finally, Gil-Yeong-ah. You have woken up."

[Judge, 'Sakyamuni's Successor', likes these young Tang Sanzangs.]

[A portion of audience members enjoy watching the adorable antics of

Tang Sanzangs.]

[20 additional points have been awarded.]

Yi Gil-Yeong hesitated greatly where he stood, unable to do anything under the outpouring of attention other than bobbing his lips up and down. He had started this whole thing, but his expression clearly showed that he had no idea what to do next.

In the end, he resorted to shouting out, his face flushed beet red. "I'm gonna apply Dok-Ja hyung's ointment from now on!"

As if he had finally realised what needed to be said here, he spoke in a triumphant voice next. "Got that? You'll be in charge of that sooty bastard from here on!"

Yi Ji-Hye dashed forward before I even realised it and smacked the back of Yi Gil-Yeong's head. Unsurprisingly, the boy grandly faceplanted nose-first into the ground.

"Why did you mention Kim Dok-Ja there, you dumbass?!"

She pinched his ear and pulled him up to lecture him properly.

Meanwhile, Shin Yu-Seung watched the proceedings and shook her head, before returning to her job of applying the ointment.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was stroking his cheek in awkwardness as if he couldn't really get used to the cream on his skin…

「Kim Dok-Ja watched all these happen with a quiet smile.」

['The 4th Wall' is gradually getting thicker.]

「As if, he was looking at a spectacle happening in the distance.」

The smartphone inside my inner pocket was busy creating paragraphs

on its own. As the texts floated up, I looked at my companions and thought to myself.

Right, maybe I…

「Maybe in that moment, Kim Dok-Ja made up his mind up over a certain something for the first time ever.」

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The transformation into the Outer God gradually sped up. What was once 71% soon

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became 75%, and it only took a proverbial blink to shoot past 80%.

But when it got around to 85%, it suddenly came to a dead stop.

It was all thanks to my companions looking after me.

"Here, eat this. Oh, and this, too."

As if it was inversely proportional to my 'infection' rate, the scenario clear speed of my companions actually accelerated gradually. As expected, the combination of the 94th scenario's Yu Jung-Hyeok and Yi Ji-Hye was incredible to behold.

"Senior brother, over there!"

"Below us."

As befitting the disciples of the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship], they were in perfect sync with one another.

The majority of the enemies were taken care of even before they could approach us or come up with dastardly schemes against us. On top of that, they even resorted to using power levels that surpassed the scope of the original to suppress our enemies.

[Current rate of Journey to the West's progress: 43%]

[Fable chamber ranking has improved!]

[Current ranking of the applicable Fable chamber is 21st.]

[Judge, 'Golden-bodied Arhat', is happy with his current appearance as a pretty young girl swordswoman.]

Shin Yu-Seung, now finding herself with nothing to do just like me, muttered to no one in particular. "It'd been nice if Hui-Won unni and Hyeon-Seong ahjussi could come along, too."

It seemed that those two couldn't participate this time.

Yi Hyeon-Seong wouldn't have woken up just yet. He had entered the final phase of

[Steel Transformation], so I figured that he'd be sleeping for a long while. However,

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there should be no problem in regards to his life.

The real problem would be with after he had woken up, actually.

Whatever the case might have been, I thought that this scenario could come to an end in less than ten days at our current pace.

And so, yet another day came to a close, and then another one, and eventually, four days went by.

[Current rate of Journey to the West's progress: 64%]

[Current ranking of the applicable Fable chamber is 15th.]

[A high number of competitors are keeping a hostile eye on the applicable Fable chamber.]

All I did during those four days was ride on the bus, sleep to my heart's content, chat with my companions about nothing important, and consume a ton of elixirs.

[Your Incarnation Body has recovered to a noticeable degree!]

[Energy is returning gradually to your Incarnation body.]

…It felt like my cheeks had become fatter by a bit, too.

As I enjoyed this abundant, easy-going life, Yi Ji-Hye, Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong all observed me with satisfied expressions on their faces.

…As if they were farmers feeling happy about a pig growing all fat and juicy and the like.

"Here! Eat this one, too!"

"Please, take this."

…Why were they so happy about me consuming these things, anyway?

Yi Ji-Hye to my side complained a little while chuckling out. "They say that if you can't get a pheasant, then get a chicken instead. I mean, it's nice to see you eat well and be

healthy, you know. If only we fed that guy as diligently as we're doing now."

Time continued to tick by.

"Keu-heuk! This isn't over, Zhu Bajie!"

We encountered Han Myeong-Oh playing different roles many times, and…

…We even ran into a potential helper of ambiguous identity, sporting a wild beard as if 'he' was some sort of a Taoist deity or something.

[Hmm, hmm. I'm this mountain's deity spirit. I've learnt a long time ago that you are on a noble journey to India. I have been waiting for you to reach here so that I can provide you with a little bit of help…]

The kids cried out at the so-called 'deity spirit' blessed with a head full of bright blonde hair and the obviously-fake beard.

"Ha-Yeong unni!"

"Ha-Yeong hyung!"

Fin.

[Uh-hum. I'm not this Ha-Yeong-or-rather, but someone simply passing b… Damn it, hey, Disciple Sun. Get over here and fetch this elixir already.]

The blondie mountain deity spirit promptly gave up on her acting and called out to me.

Such a thing happened often back in the Journey to the West.

[A portion of judges are complaining that such events didn't need to

be imitated.]

[One additional point has been awarded.]

A spirit would suddenly pop out of nowhere and help out the group, saying that it was the will of the Buddha-nim or something similar. Such blatant acts of ignoring probability and deus ex machina ran rampant in the original Journey to the West; so much so that I had to wonder whether it was the very first 'lump all lucky coincidences to one person' type novel or not.

I courteously bowed a little and spoke. "Thank you for helping us out always."

[…Only doing it because I've been told to.] Perhaps reminded of someone right now, Jang Ha-Yeong looked up at the sky with a resentful expression and muttered to no one in particular. [Count yourself lucky… If I hadn't been late, the role of the 'Demon King of Salvation' would've been mine…]

That came out so naturally, didn't it. It seemed that this role was supposed to be Jang Ha-Yeong's.

“…Why did you want to perform this role?"

She looked at me with distant eyes before shaking her head with a smirk.

[Well, yeah, you wouldn't know anything about how awesome the 'Demon King of

Salvation' actually is.]

I thought about it for a little while, before speaking up with a voice overflowing with affection towards, uh, myself. "I also like the 'Demon King of Salvation' very much."

[Oh, really? Have you heard some kind of Fables about him, then?]

"For instance, the 'Liberator of the Industrial Complex' he earned in the Demon World."

[Oh-oht?]

That must've flipped a switch in her somewhere, because Jang Ha-Yeong suddenly started telling me a long-winded tale of her adventure. If I were to simplify the contents somewhat, it went something like this.

[So like back then, I managed to rescue the dying 'Demon King of Salvation', you see?

So when you get right down to it, I actually saved the 'Demon King of Salvation'. So? It was fun, right? It wasn't…? In any case, we came to a mutual understanding right below the Root of Darkness and made a pledge of brotherhood. We worked together to liberate the 'Industrial Complex' from the grips of a dastardly Demon Duke, and…!]

…The story was more or less accurate, but I couldn't be sure why it felt like I was stuck listening to a novel being read here.

[And then, the 'Demon King of Salvation' looked at me with gloom-filled eyes and said,

"My dear friend, become my warrior that will fight for my sake."]

I began wondering if it was alright to let a baseless story such as this one to float around, but messages suddenly floated up in the air en masse before I could do anything about it.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is criticising the deity spirit's nonsense!]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is arguing that it was him who performed the most heroics back in the Demon World!]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is ridiculing the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'.]

[Many audience members are getting interested in the Nebula

Company>'s Fable.]

As things stood, I couldn't really tell apart whether we were in the [Journey to the West] or [Kim Dok-Ja Company's Disorganised Great Adventure Get-Together].

Maybe, that was what Han Su-Yeong was aiming for.

As the 's Fable grew stronger, the potential 'Great Fable' we'd earn through this [Journey to the West Remake] would also become stronger, too.

[Fables of the are spreading throughout the via word of mouth.]

Well, we'd have to wait and see if that was ultimately a good decision or not.

How long passed by like this? Yi Ji-Hye yawned out of pure boredom and spoke up.

"Argh, just finish up and hand over the elixir, will you?"

[…Here.]

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Another week went by.

We defeated countless Yogoes and also faced off against the Constellations from

that showed up to retrieve those creatures afterwards.

[Those Yogoes that you subjugated earlier were creatures that I raised in my backya…]

"Scram."

Yu Jung-Hyeok kicked them away instead of me. Seemingly wanting to avoid fighting the 'Conquering King' Zhu Bajie, 's Constellations went away willingly even though they expressed their dissatisfaction

over the matter.

[Outer God transformation progress percentage: 95%]

[Rate of your Outer God transformation has been slowed down.]

The rate of becoming an Outer God hadn't progressed all that much during that time.

On the other hand, our group's rate of advancing through the Journey to the West was shockingly fast.

[Current rate of Journey to the West's progress: 94%]

We had finally broken past the 90% mark.

Yi Ji-Hye spoke while panting breathlessly. "Wow, now that was really tough."

"It seems that way, especially for today."

"What are you even talking about? You are just riding a bus, aren't you?"

I ignored her retort and confirmed the Fable chamber ranking, instead.

[Current ranking of the applicable Fable chamber is 4th.]

[Score: 21912]

[Many audience members are marvelling at the applicable Fable chamber's stunning rate of growth.]

It hadn't even been ten days, yet we had already brushed aside all the other, starrier chambers and climbed up to the 4th rank. I couldn't help but respect Han Su-Yeong's talent, even if I didn't want to.

[Current number one in the rankings is the 'Real Journey to the West'.]

[Score: 30408]

With our current speed, I thought that it'd not be impossible to catch up to Fei Hu, currently the undisputed number one in the rankings.

Of course, it was still too early to celebrate. The competition wouldn't end even if we managed to surpass Fei Hu's chamber and claim the top spot.

Because, the overall victor would be determined only after collating the total voted points and the judges' opinions.

I looked up at the stars blinking high up in the night sky – at the Constellations,

currently listed as mere anonymous audience members.

[A portion of audience members are holding animosity towards you.]

Without a doubt, must be watching the rise of our ranking right now.

「The pride feels about their 'Great Fable' is enormous.」

They would never accept their 'Great Fable' being inherited by a weak little Nebula.

Besides, there was a good reason for them to feel dissatisfied with us, too.

Such as…

"There are a lot of them now, aren't they."

…The group of 'Yogoes' currently following us.

The ranks of 'Yogoes' filling up the footpath of the mountain were so humongous that I couldn't even see their end anymore.

Every single one of them were creatures we had spared.

[The agreement with the Wenny King is underway.]

[In order to fulfil the agreement, you need to increase the shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable Fable to over 30%.]

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 15.772%.]

The Journey to the West was marching closer to its end, yet the shares for the 'Outer Gods' remained depressingly low. I had saved that many Yogoes, but the percentage was only over 15…

But then again, it was pretty obvious why. Sure, there were a lot of them, but they didn't impact our story all that much. Meaning, the core of the 'Journey to the West'

hadn't changed. They had been participating as mere 'extras' on this stage and not as its main actors.

The only reason why their shares had risen past 15% was simply because many in the audience ended up paying attention to this rather abnormal situation, that was all.

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[Many audience members are looking at the 'Pilgrimage' in awe.]

[A portion of judges are focusing on the possibility of a new 'Journey to the West'.]

[A small number of judges are worried about the perversion of the original…]

This march of the Yogoes even earned a nickname, to boot: the

Pilgrimage.

Countless Yogoes, journeying to India so that they could become enlightened on their existence.

[A portion of audience members are entering the applicable scenario in order to view the 'Pilgrimage'.]

Heck, recommendations for our Fable chamber even showed up in the 'Journey to the West' recommendation bulletin board, too.

[Cool Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing, adorable Tang Sanzang, and the soft Sun Wukong.]

Author: uri9158

- Review: Zhu Bajie is so cool, and Tang Sanzangs are super cute, too.

['I've become the retired SSSSS-rank', a masterpiece that initially sounds like a mass-produced Fable.]

Author: Non-Mass Production-type Maker

- Review: In all honesty, the real protagonists of the 'Journey to the West' are 'Yogoes'.

Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing, they are all 'Yogoes'. Yet the Journey to the West's theme is infinitely closer to 'humanism'. It's because all the Yogoes appearing in the original had been humanised extensively from a human's perspective. Meaning, Yogoes from the Journey to the West had to live as 'humans' after their status as Yogoes had been stolen from them…

…It felt as if the names of the authors were kind of familiar, but that must be a mistake on my part. Surely.

Whatever the case might have been, we were getting quite a few puzzling recommendations.

"They are still following us…”

Shin Yu-Seung walking at the rear of the group next to me kept glancing behind her as if something was bothering her. She seemed to hesitate slightly, but then, extended her hand out to a Yogoe acting like a puppy by her feet.

“…Hi?"

I was slightly nervous about the Yogoe suddenly attacking her, but thankfully, what I feared didn't happen.

Yogoe crouched like an obedient puppy and rubbed its nose against the tip of her fingers. This guy was no longer the terrifying 'Outer God' that I knew of.

[SowarmSowarmSowarmSowarm]

They were not the 'demonic beasts' that Shin Yu-Seung could tame. Well, 'Outer Gods'

weren't designated as one of those friendly lifeforms, after all. They were simply

'things' that lost their usefulness, wandering around on the outside of scenarios.

Even then, Shin Yu-Seung carefully paid attention to them with a serious expression on her face.

[YuseungYuseungYuseungYuseungYuseung]

[NamemeNamemeNamemeNamemeNameme]

Did she actually understand them?

Could she understand their words and see what their real appearance was?

I hesitated a little before asking her. "Aren't you afraid?"

"Not at all. It's like, when I keep looking at them, I find them kind of cute, in a way.

And…”

Small tentacles resembling those of an octopus tickled the back of her hand like a stoke of foxtail.

“…A person I like appeared like this once before, you see."

Suddenly, a short bout of migraine and dizziness rushed in along with a zing in my head.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' level 2, is forcibly activating!]

「Maybe, he could be here with us this time, too.」

I saw her determined eyes scanning the ranks of Yogoes and bit down hard on my lip.

[Notice to all Constellation-nims currently participating in the scenario.]

An unannounced broadcast suddenly came from somewhere.

The surrounding atmosphere trembled and Yogoes all looked up at the sky with worried expressions.

[TheycomingTheycomingTheycomingTheycoming]

[DontlikeDontlikeDontlikeDontlikeDontlike]

Cries of the 'Outer Gods' rose up from here and there.

A Great Dokkaebi appearing as a semi-transparent figure was being transmitted in the sky above.

[The 'Journey to the West Remake' scenario is gradually inching towards its conclusion. I heard that recently, due to the point gap between the upper ranks and the middle being too great, many Constellation-nims are half-way giving up on the scenario itself.]

What an ominous-sounding opening remark that was.

[is fair with its opportunities. An eel that struggles can become a Dragon, and inversely, a Dragon ruling the sky can also fall to the ground, as well.]

For a moment there, the Great Dokkaebi seemed to have glanced in our direction.

[So, ending things here would leave behind a bit of a sour taste, wouldn't you say?]

"Uh? What's going on?!"

Along with Yi Ji-Hye's loud yell, our surroundings began transforming. As the rays of bright light exploded, our group as well as the Yogoes had been transferred to the bank of a massive river.

[Fable chambers are being consolidated!]

[The 'I've become the retired SSSSS-rank Sun Wukong' has been incorporated into the

'Great Fable'.]

(Sun Wukong knew which river this was.)

(They were now in the western riverbank of Tongtian River. This was the final hurdle before reaching India.)

The Great Dokkaebi laughed. [Deciding the first spot through just the score alone is not amusing. However, isn't 'finding out which 'Fable' is stronger' the natural law of

?]

[Many audience members are cheering on and agreeing with that

declaration!]

[A small number of audience members are smacking their lips!]

[A portion of judges are frowning at the interference of a Great Dokkaebi.]

As the messages streamed in, large pillars of light began flashing in various spots of the riverside.

[421st Fable chamber has been consolidated!]

[The 'My Sun Wukong is broken from a certain point on' has been incorporated into the 'Great Fable'.]

We found another group exactly like ours over there.

The stunned-silly Yi Gil-Yeong shouted out. "Who are those people?!"

That group also featured Sun Wukong, Tang Sanzang, Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing, and the White Dragon Horse.

Indeed, they were a 'Journey to the West' expedition team from another Fable chamber.

[7133rd Fable chamber has been consolidated!]

[The 'I thought I was Sun Wukong but I was just a regular monkey' has been incorporated into the 'Great Fable'.]

[6523rd Fable chamber has been consolidated!]

[The 'Omniscient Sun Wukong Ruyi Bang's Viewpoint' has been incorporated into the

'Great Fable'.]

As the pillars of light continued to descend, many 'Sun Wukongs'

revealed themselves on the riverbanks. Some possessed weak Status, while some others possessed mighty ones. And then…

[1st Fable chamber has been consolidated!]

[The 'Real Journey to the West' has been incorporated into the 'Great Fable'.]

…Some even possessed an overwhelming Status, too.

Every single one making up that particular Fable chamber was among the top elite of elite Constellations.

The 'Sun Wukong' currently ranked number one was looking over in our direction, his eyes burning in the pale-blue ghostly flames.

…As expected, it had come down to this.

I had been anticipating that something like this might happen. Because, at the rate the things were going, Fei Hu's side would've lost to us in the points tally.

[A portion of judges are worried about your safety.]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is furious at this development!]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is getting curious about the conclusion of this scenario.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', orders you to sweep every one of these people away!]

Not only that, the main judges were already siding with us to boot, too. Indeed, that

side probably had no choice but to do something before the situation

worsened even further for them.

[Details of the main scenario have been updated!]

The voice of the Great Dokkaebi resounded out next.

[And so, the final event of the 'Journey to the West Remake' will start now.]

Fin.

[The final event of the 'Journey to the West Remake' will start now.]

Jeong Hui-Won bit her lip as she listened to the voice coming out of the panel in the air. She wanted to be there as well. She wanted to fight alongside her companions.

“…Hyeon-Seong-ssi."

However, she couldn't go because of the man lying in slumber on the hospital bed. It was Yi Hyeon-Seong, currently covered from head to toe in steel, with no signs of a heartbeat.

He hadn't recovered from the damage he suffered during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

The mirror next to the bed reflected Jeong Hui-Won's hair, now half-covered in a silver colour. Another after-effect from the

aforementioned Great War.

- You take a breather for a bit. I don't have any roles to give you, anyway.

She understood very well that this was Han Su-Yeong's, and her companions', way of showing their concern towards her.

She had been inflicted with simply too heavy a wound. Both her body and mind were in a mess. She failed to rescue Kim Dok-Ja again, and the man trying to protect her had fallen into a coma. That was how the sharpest blade in the

had lost her edge.

Her [Sword of Judgement] resting against a corner of the bed trembled noticeably.

This weapon would vibrate only when 'evil' was nearby. A weapon that Kim Dok-Ja had gifted her. Its tip was pointing straight at the display panel. Perhaps it also knew that the place she should be right now wasn't here.

Jeong Hui-Won cautiously reached out and as if to pacify the blade, embraced its hilt.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at her Incarnation with a helpless expression.]

As a result of the Great War of Saints and Demons, both and the Demon World had collapsed. Countless Archangels and Demon Kings died, and the 'justice' Jeong Hui-Won believed in couldn't be found there.

Even then, she had to wield this sword.

It was then that she felt a subtle movement on the bed.

"Hyeon-Seong-ssi!"

How long ago did it happen? Yi Hyeon-Seong had opened his eyes and was staring at the display panel. His lips bobbed up and down, trying to say something.

“…Excuse me?"

She pressed her head closer, but still couldn't hear his voice. His lips moved slowly.

She began recognising the shapes of his lips.

Can't.

Lose.

Again.

Her fists clenched tightly once more. Her fury began rising up. Why was he being like this? Even when his body had ended up in this state.

Jeong Hui-Won couldn't suppress her emotions any longer and was about to grasp his hand, but then, his entire body suddenly began transforming.

He emitted blinding rays of silvery light, before shrinking down and becoming a single sword.

"What is this…?!"

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She was so stunned that she inadvertently let go of this new version of Yi Hyeon-Seong.

Now lying on the bed, the blade Yi Hyeon-Seong began sobbing. As if that was the only thing he could right now.

She vacantly fell on her butt, lowered her head and muttered softly.

"Just what are you trying to…”

It was then when the hospital room's door flung open.

She looked back to find Han Su-Yeong there, even though she should've been working as the 'Scenario Master'.

"Jeong Hui-Won."

The moment she heard that voice, Jeong Hui-Won's heart began beating even faster.

And just like her, the sword of steel shuddered on top of the bed. She knew very well what the heart of that weapon was thinking about.

Everyone had their own ways of enduring against the world.

She slowly reached out to the Steelsword and while tightly grasping its hilt, raised her voice. "You have a role available for me, yes?"

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As the Great Dokkaebi's voice resounded out, a new scenario window popped up in the air.

[Linked Main Scenario is starting!]

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Type: Main

Difficulty: Indeterminable

Clear condition: Break past the horde of Yogoes and acquire the 「Sacred Texts」 on the other side of the Tongtian River.

Time limit: 2 hours

Reward: Great Fable related to the 'Journey to the West', 5,000,000 Coins, ???

Failure: -

* The applicable scenario contains a hidden 'piece'.

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Almost at the same time, the water level of the Tongtian River swelled up rapidly. Walls of water rushed in like tsunami waves and instantly filled up the surroundings.

Right afterwards, the screeches and howls of the Yogoes blanketed the sky.

[KillthemKillthemKillthemKillthemKillthem]

[AhAhAhAhAhAhAh]

The horde boasted far greater numbers than the Yogoes following us currently.

[Current shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 15.872%.]

The remaining 'Outer God' shares to fulfil the agreement with the Wenny King were 14.128%.

Meaning, I had to reach the rest of the amount during this event.

[WuWuWuWuWu…]

I looked back to see the Yogoes making up the 'Pilgrimage' with us were howling out towards the sky.

[Well, then, I shall be anticipating a wonderful finale to this scenario.]

The Great Dokkaebi vanished, and as more pillars of light descended, the 'protagonists'

from other Journey to the West began making their entrance.

"Let's go!"

"The sacred texts are ours!"

The crowd from all the consolidated Fable chambers were scything past the Tongtian's waters to advance forward.

"I'm the real Sun Wukong!"

Some rode on the Somersault Cloud, while others resorted to magic spells to fly over the river's tumbling water. It seemed that they were planning to cross this river by gliding over it.

Unfortunately, that was a really bad decision to make, if my knowledge on the 'Journey to the West' was correct.

[All skills and Stigmas related to 'Flight' are restricted from use in the applicable scenario.]

Powerful sparks danced in the sky and everyone flying in the air crashed into the river below along with their screams.

"What's the meaning of this?!"

After falling into the river water, the members of other Fable chambers began shouting in anger at the Great Dokkaebi up in the air. However, it simply shrugged its shoulders nonchalantly.

I looked at this spectacle and spoke up. "This journey wouldn't have any meaning to it if we were allowed to fly from the beginning."

Yu Jung-Hyeok next to me muttered out as if he was chewing on his words. "…

Everything happening here is also destined to become a Fable, is it."

"That's correct."

In the end, the 'Journey to the West' was a story of travelling on a tough road in great adversity.

Even if you were travelling on the same road, choosing how to travel changed the story

greatly. Traversing the distance that could be bridged in one day by riding on the Somersault Cloud, for over 14 years while surviving and enduring against all sorts of trials and tribulations – because such a 'Fable' existed, the sacred texts at the end of the journey now had meaning to its existence, too.

(And so, the final hurdle to this very story was waiting for the travelling group.) Yi Gil-Yeong heard the narration and softly grumbled to himself. "… I'm not very good at swimming, though."

The Tongtian River was truly wide.

Since not everyone could ride on the back of Tang Sanzang's White Dragon Horse, we had to swim across the river to get to the other side.

For sure, several teams had already jumped into the water and started swimming vigorously. It was unknown where those things had been acquired, but well, some teams were busy paddling their boats forward, while some others were riding on logs, propelling themselves forward by using wind magic.

Yi Ji-Hye watched that unfolding spectacle and lightly slapped the boy's shoulder before stepping forward. "Hey, don't worry about it. We aren't going to do that."

Along with her confident voice, a new message came from the sky above.

[An audience member is revealing himself.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is nodding his head.]

…I had completely forgotten about him.

"Come, Geobukseon!"

[Great Fable, 'Next City', has begun its storytelling!]

Yi Ji-Hye raised her Twin Dragon Sword up high into the sky.

The river water before us parted in the middle and the hull of a massive battleship rose up to the surface accompanied by a magnificent light show.

Several Incarnations getting swept up by the waves screamed out.

"What the hell?! What's this??"

The battleship sporting a turtle-like back and the head of a dragon – the [Turtle Dragon]. The Star Relic Yi Ji-Hye and the kids earned by clearing the 'Next City'

scenario revealed itself before our very eyes.

However, I couldn't help but wonder if it was okay for us to ride that. Because in the

'Journey to the West'…

[Star Relic, 'Turtle Dragon', corresponds with the 「Journey to the West Remake」!]

(As the group fell into danger and struggled to move forward, a gigantic white turtle Yogoe appeared to give them a ride.)

[A portion of judges are satisfied by the minutely-detailed reflection of the original story.]

[20 additional points have been awarded!]

…To think that such an event happened in the 'Journey to the West'. What an excellent development that was.

We quickly climbed aboard the battleship.

"Set sail!"

Along with Yi Ji-Hye's loud yell, the battleship rapidly advanced forward while splitting the river water.

The teams crossing the water before us all looked at the battleship with dazed, forlorn faces. Although unfortunate, we didn't have the leeway to worry about them at the moment.

"Uhm… Unni, please do your best not to harm the Yogoes."

"Don't worry."

I couldn't tell where she learned to drive, but well, Yi Ji-Hye utilised her preternatural

driving skill to evade the horde of Yogoes rushing at us. Not only that, the Yogoes trying to attack us with animosity flinched and stopped after spotting all the other Yogoes riding on our ship.

[Who ar e y ou gu ys?]

A portion of the Yogoes that joined the 'Pilgrimage' were hanging on the battleship, while the rest was crossing the river right behind the vessel.

Perhaps these creatures interfered with their own journeys, the Sun Wukongs from other Fable chambers began wielding their Ruyi Bangs.

"Those sons of bitches…!"

The enraged Yi Ji-Hye clenched her fists tightly, but it was not possible to save everyone. The deaths of Yogoes were unfolding all over the Tongtian River, after all.

[Gu-waaaaahk!]

The members of other Fable chambers advanced forward while slaughtering Yogoes blocking their paths. Yogoe's flesh and blood rained down from everywhere.

[A high number of audience members are cheering on this spectacle of slaughter!]

Yogoes continued to die. The monsters that didn't earn their meanings because they failed to create their Fables. They were sacrifices offered up to complete this 'Journey to the West'.

The novel, 'Journey to the West'. A lengthy journey for the goal of transcending one's humanity.

To let the audience watching the Fable reach enlightenment of their own, Yogoes had to be buried under this Tongtian River's waters.

"Kill them! Kill them all!"

These protagonists of the 'Journey to the West' supposedly walking on the road of enlightenment used the dead Yogoes as their bridge and tried to cross the Tongtian River. Innumerable Yogoes became their footholds, and those unfortunate protagonists from some Fable chambers who got killed off also became another foothold for

someone else.

Sadly, no one would remember the names of the footholds.

[Our st ories are]

[I wa nted to con ti nue but]

If only they could live.

And if only they could become the main characters of this 'Great Fable'…

"Myeong-Oh ahjussi, just stay still, will ya! I'm telling you, it's safe here."

"Safe, my ass! You think I'll fall for that again?!"

[Stigma, 'One-legged Swift Horse Lv.???' is ready to activate.]

Whether one's leg was cut off or its arm was lost… That creature would be remembered by this world.

[7133rd Fable chamber's entire roster has been annihilated.]

[487th Fable chamber's entire roster has been annihilated.]

With every passing second, the number of Fable chambers being ejected continued to increase. And as if to proportionally match that figure, the number of Yogoes crashing down also increased exponentially.

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[SavemSavemSavemeSavemeSaveme]

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 15.773%.]

The 'Outer God' shares that I worked so hard to increase began dropping little by little.

Even though so many Yogoes still remained…

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 14.973%.]

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And then, the shares began tumbling down at an alarming rate next.

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 14.473%.]

But then again, maybe it was an obvious result.

Because they were villains to be defeated in this world, not its main characters.

[AhAhAhAhAhAhAh]

Perhaps he noticed the direction of my gaze, Yu Jung-Hyeok suddenly began talking to me. "… Surely, you fool must've realised this. You can't save everyone."

Those words hurt especially more so because they came from Yu Jung-Hyeok himself.

"Like what you said earlier, it's because this is a 'Fable'."

His eyes were now looking at the dead Yogoes beneath the surface of the water.

Because this was a Fable, not everyone could be saved. I knew exactly what those words meant.

"Not everything in this world can become its protagonist."

An extra couldn't become a main character.

And the 'Outer Gods' couldn't even serve as the extras, so they were being forced out of the 'Fable'.

The dying Yogoes were looking up at us.

[IcouldalsodoitIcouldalsodoit]

[CaptainCaptainCaptainCaptain]

[WhoamIWhoamIWhoamIWhoamI]

Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't hear those voices.

I thought that might be a good thing.

"All you can do right now is to let everyone know that they exist here." He stared past the fog-covered Tongtian River and spoke. "With that… You have done everything you set out to do."

What I set out to do.

As if to respond to our conversation, the narration suddenly began yapping on.

(The best they could do was to let the world know that Yogoes were in this place.) Perhaps Han Su-Yeong was feeling as much indignation and grief as I had.

The Tongtian's water rained down, corpses of Yogoes floating away on the river's surface.

[Many audience members are resonating with the theme of 「I've become the retired

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SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong」.]

[A portion of judges are currently feeling melancholic.]

Extras were just that, extras, while the main character would be the main character.

A story where everyone could become its protagonist didn't exist.

I knew that.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is repeatedly grabbing and letting go of his hair.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is contemplating on the lives of the Yogoes.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is asking, although he isn't sure, if they could all be saved.]

However, even if that was true…

[Shares of 'Outer God' are tumbling lower at an alarming rate.]

[Current shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 13.473%.]

I just couldn't be satisfied with this result and end it here.

[Scenario Master is now looking at you.]

It seemed that perhaps Han Su-Yeong was thinking along the same line.

"It's the turtle! Steal it!"

Several uninvited guests clambered up on the side of the [Turtle Dragon] and shouted out. They were from other Fable chambers, feeling envious of our ship.

"Get rid of them! As soon as we kill…”

Unfortunately for them, they picked the wrong opponents today.

Slice!

Yi Ji-Hye's [Twin Dragon Sword] sliced off the head of a hapless Sun Wukong that landed on the deck.

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is rubbing his neck with a spooked expression.]

The Sun Wukong who lost his head fell back into the river water, unable to even mouth a scream. Sha Wujing and Zhu Bajie freaked out from that sight, roared out loudly, and landed on the deck next.

"You insolent…!"

"Seeing that you're still sticking to the script, you guys aren't going to win."

Yi Ji-Hye's [Kendo] mercilessly slashed out and split the air apart, while Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung also ran to her sides to use their experienced fists and kicks to punt other Incarnations off the deck. Chimera Dragon had morphed into a full-on Dragon Horse and flapped its wings to create a powerful gust of wind.

"You measly little…!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok had already climbed up to the highest point in the ship by then. He unsheathed his weapon with an icy-cold expression. Sparks danced violently on the blade of his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

Breaking the Sky Thunder Blade.

His sword attack, capable of even shattering the heavens, slammed into the waters of the Tongtian like a thunderclap.

"Kuwaaaahk!!"

Incarnations were roasted black by the azure-blue lightning and exploded like fireworks. Only then the surviving ones realise the severity of their current situation and yelled out to each other.

"How the hell can a Zhu Bajie be that strong?!"

"C-could it be, that Pigsy is…??"

"It's them!! They are the main characters from [I've become the retired

Sun Wukong]!!"

…It seemed that our identity had been exposed now.

[Hidden information of the scenario is now open to the public.]

[Your Fable chamber ranking will rise up by defeating the main characters from another Fable chamber with a higher ranking.]

"Even if we don't get our hands on the sacred texts, our ranking will rise if we just kill them!"

After reaching the higher rankings, even if they didn't win the event, they could still enjoy quite the amount of rewards.

"Kill him!! Hunt down that Zhu Bajie first!"

Dozens of actors rushed in towards the battleship while stepping on the corpses of the Yogoes. Some of them happened to be quite powerful Incarnations as well as Constellations.

I urgently looked back at my companions, but they didn't seem to be flustered at all.

"I guess it might get a little more entertaining now."

"Sun Wukong, be still and stay back."

Yi Ji-Hye grinned and unleashed her Status.

[Great Fable, 'Next City', has begun its storytelling!]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is revealing his Status!]

Under Yi Gil-Yeong's and Shin Yu-Seung's control, the Dragon Horse regained its former appearance of the Jade Dragon.

Ku-ohhhh!!

At the same time, energy from powerful Fables exploded out of my companions'

Incarnation Bodies.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

The Chimera Dragon breathed out fire from the sky and dissipated the Tongtian's waters, and Yu Jung-Hyeok dashed in and out among the rising screen of vapour.

Slice! Slice!!

Every time jet-black light flashed, Sun Wukongs and Zhu Bajies with unknown names died in droves.

I shuddered from that sight. I knew that my companions were powerful, but I still didn't expect them to be this strong. This was the result of them surviving many nonsensical scenarios up to this point.

"Kuwaaaahk!"

Participating in the 95th scenario together didn't mean that everyone's level was the same.

It was rather similar to the 'Journey to the West' itself.

People's methods of reaching its end destination were all different. Some wanted to fly in comfort, while some would only select the easiest roads to walk on.

However, the members of the were different.

(They arrived at this point in time through the hardest method there was.) They couldn't fly nor could they choose to tread the easiest paths. They walked on their own two legs again and again.

They beat back many unfair trials and tribulations, endured against misfortunes, and while holding back their grief, they reached this far with their own strengths.

(And the result of that was this.)

This story's true protagonists were them, receiving the blinding light of grace belonging to the 'Great Fables'. As I bore witness to this spectacle, I began recalling a certain old

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memory.

(That place back in the 1863rd turn was also the 95th scenario.) I wanted to show this to Han Su-Yeong of the 1863rd turn. I wanted to tell her. Just like how you had proved it to me, there were people here who also had survived, as well.

(This is the story of the 3rd turn that you don't know.) Yu Jung-Hyeok number [999] sitting on my shoulder was also watching this unfolding spectacle.

What would the one who lost his own regression turn and entered this world-line, think about after taking in this sight?

[Fable chamber ranking has risen up!]

[Score: 25912]

[Current ranking of the applicable Fable chamber is 3rd.]

[Many audience members and judges are awarding additional points!]

Our Fable chamber's ranking climbed really quickly.

It seemed there were a few actors from higher-ranked Fable chambers than ours mixed in among all the assailants coming after us.

[Fable chamber ranking has risen up!]

[Score: 26412]

[Current ranking of the applicable Fable chamber is 2nd.]

Finally, second place.

We had brushed aside thousands of other chambers and finally reached the cusp of victory. That only served to make me more anxious, however.

[Current shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 13.142%.]

Even as the real protagonists were leaving their mark, the deaths of those relegated to the role of extras continued on unabated. So, the shares of the 'Outer Gods' continued to plummet.

In order to fulfil the agreement of the Wenny King, the shares had to exceed 30%. Even if our chamber won this 'Great Fable' event, everything would go back to square one if I failed to uphold that agreement.

Booooom!!

The hull of the battleship was rocked to the side just then.

Powerful magical cannon shells were raining down from beyond the fog of the battlefield.

"What the hell?! Which arseholes…?"

Yi Ji-Hye quickly regained her balance and activated her Stigma.

[Character, 'Yi Ji-Hye', has activated the 'Ghost Fleet Lv.10'!]

A dozen phantom ships rose up on either side of the [Turtle Dragon] and commenced firing at once. Caught between the exchange of a vast number of cannon shells, the Incarnations and Yogoes in the surroundings were vaporised without a chance to even scream in pain.

Soon, the shelling stopped and dozens of battleships revealed themselves from the murky fog of the cannon smoke.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is gasping out.]

Ku-gugugugu.

Those ships had surrounded ours in a crane wing-like formation.

Even if the 'Maritime War God' was an excellent Constellation when it came to naval warfare, there simply were way too many enemies this time. Not only that…

“…Fei Hu."

As I listened to Yu Jung-Hyeok's heavy voice, I spotted a certain someone standing on

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the gunwhale of the opposing ship.

The protagonist of the Fable chamber ranked number 1, the [Real Journey to the West], was there.

It seemed that they had prepared the battleships in advance. And their numbers vastly outstripped ours.

"Aren't they Fable-grade Constellations?"

We also spotted other members of the [Real Journey to the West]. As expected, the roles of Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing were played by 's Constellations.

Zhu Bajie was played by the Master of the Three-Pointed Double-Edged Spear, Erlang Shen.

Meanwhile, it seemed that the actor for Sha Wujing was the third son of Vaisravana, Prince Nezha.

They were actual characters from the original 'Journey to the West', and Sun Wukong's old foes as well.

It was not for nothing that the saying of 'Victory is already Fei Hu's' did the rounds back in the original 'Ways of Survival'. The actual Constellations from the 'Journey to the West' made their appearance as Fei Hu's team members, so it was only obvious that the Constellations from other chambers didn't even stand a chance against them.

[A portion of audience members have revealed their identities.]

[Constellations of the Nebula, , are looking at Fei Hu's battlefield.]

Not only that, even the lights from the constellations of the '28 Mansions' were glittering behind them, too.

Those gazes, implying that they'd enter the battlefield at any given moment, presented us with incredible pressure just by being there.

Yu Jung-Hyeok scanned the battlefield and spoke. "I don't see their Tang Sanzang."

Now that he mentioned it, I couldn't see their Tang Sanzang, either.

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The one to receive the sacred texts in the original story was Tang Sanzang. So, they wouldn't have stashed him somewhere safe under the current situ…

No, hang on. If the person tasked with retrieving the sacred texts was supposed to be Tang Sanzang, then…

"I think something is busy running away over there?"

At the place Yi Gil-Yeong pointed at, we could see battleships hurriedly distancing themselves away from here.

It seemed that a portion would remain behind and block us, while the rest would set sail towards the 'sacred texts'.

Which meant that Fei Hu's Tang Sanzang was somewhere among those fleeing ships.

"They are planning to secure the 'sacred texts' while wasting our time here."

Yi Ji-Hye loudly yelled out. "Dammit! I'll take care of this place, so go ahead!"

One of the ships from the [Ghost Fleet] came to our side and Yu Jung-Hyeok, Yi Gil-Yeong, Shin Yu-Seung and I climbed onboard it. The phantom ship then also began rushing forward in great haste.

Kuwaaaaah!!

I wasn't worried about Yi Ji-Hye. She was now a respectable admiral. As long as the battle was fought on water and not anywhere else, she'd not lose even if she failed to eke out a victory.

The real problem was with this side.

One of the enemy battleships accurately blocked our route and stuck close to our side.

And it was the ship containing Fei Hu and his comrades.

"So, you are the ."

This particular Sun Wukong had piercing blue eyes. He stared at us as if he had just discovered strange lifeforms.

Yu Jung-Hyeok unsheathed his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] once more and stood in front of us, wary of his new opponent.

[Constellation, 'Master of Three-Pointed Double Edged Spear', is unleashing his Status!]

[Constellation, 'Third Son of Vaisravana', is unleashing his Status!]

They must've decided to give up on their roles at this point. Both Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha began sending warning signals in our direction from the get-go. That wasn't all.

[Constellations of the 28 Mansions of the Nebula, , are preparing to descend.]

[Lords of the Nine Stars of the Nebula, , are preparing to descend!]

…Goddammit.

I spoke sarcastically. "I guess you can't do anything without your Nebula's help?"

" is me, and I'm . It's even more foolish not to utilise what's yours already."

Even the current Yu Jung-Hyeok wouldn't be able to deal with the situation if both the

'28 Mansions' and the permanent fixture of the sky, 'Nine Stars', decided to descend here.

Besides, they were the original characters from 'Journey to the West', so they didn't even need to spend all that much Probability to enter, either.

Goddammit, we were basically trapped in the playground set in 's backyard.

"There is one thing I wish to confirm, however."

Fei Hu pulled out his Ruyi Bang and began unleashing his real Status.

The candidate for the strongest Incarnation back in the original 'Ways of Survival', Fei Hu.

I had seen his face several times before today, but never did we get into a conflict with him until now.

But that made sense, considering that he was the gold-spoon Incarnation greatly coddled and protected by .

[Great Fable, 'Inheritor of the Heavenly Palace', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Survivor of Great War of Righteous and Evil', has begun its storytelling!]

Fei Hu had diligently earned his own Great Fables in places we weren't aware of. While receiving support that was on another scale compared to ours.

[Great Fable, 'Successor of Chiyou', has begun…]

Shin Yu-Seung watched those Fables appear and muttered out as if she was puzzled by something. "… Isn't 'Chiyou' a Korean Fable?"

Perhaps that got under his skin, Fei Hu scowled deeply and flung a sword aura in our direction.

Yu Jung-Hyeok blocked that. Accompanied by the loud "Clang!", the crack in the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] grew even more noticeable.

Fei Hu's eyes flickered as if he was amused by something. "Not bad. So, you're that Zhu Bajie."

Fei Hu was strong. However, the current Yu Jung-Hyeok was more than enough to defeat him, no matter how strong he was now.

The actual problem laid with the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. With his main weapon damaged, Yu Jung-Hyeok wouldn't even be able to exert 70% of his overall strength.

"I heard that Korea's greatest Incarnation is with . That must be you, then."

As if he was waiting for this moment, Yu Jung-Hyeok stepped forward.

Yu Jung-Hyeok versus Fei Hu.

The battle of the century was about to get underway.

However, I couldn't continue riding the bus and spectate anymore. Because, that side still had Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha as well.

[Current Incarnation Body recovery rate: 71%]

[Outer God transformation rate: 96%]

[Rate of Outer God transformation currently is in a slowed-down state.]

Unfortunately, there was no way I could fight against those two in my current condition.

Shuruerueng…

The first one to make their move was Fei Hu's camp.

Prince Nezha's paopeis emitted gloriously brilliant rays of light, while a stunning level of Status exploded out from Fei Hu's body.

At the same time, a clump of light suddenly wavered in the air.

[Player 9-nim has joined the 「I've become the retired SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong」 as an 'Extra'!]

…A new actor at such a late stage?

Kugugugu!

As the lightning crashed down, a person appeared on top of the phantom ship's cabin.

The light from the lightning cracking in the dark, gloomy skies drew a lengthy shadow.

A slender figure stood there.

A pair of giant horns rose above this person's head.

[Player 9-nim's role is 'Bull Demon King'.]

…The Bull Demon King.

Now that I thought about it, I had forgotten that such a role existed.

He was a sworn brother and a comrade-in-arms of the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, Sun Wukong.

They did fight each other in the original story, but in our Fable chamber [I've become the retired SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong], he had not made his appearance yet.

In that case, just who would take on that role…?

[Voting rights are being distributed to the members of .]

[A portion of members are unable to participate in the voting.]

[Only those able to vote will participate.]

The moment I heard those words, the inside of my head blanked out.

[Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yu-Seung', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Yi Gil-Yeong', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Jeong Hui-Won', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Han Su-Yeong', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', is agreeing with the judgement.]

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry as I watched the windows containing messages continue to pop up.

[Will you use your voting right for the 'Hour of Judgement'?]

I saw the faces of my companions under the cascading shower of light.

I wanted to speak to them so badly.

However, I simply couldn't.

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Instead, this was all I could do for them right now.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is agreeing with the judgement.]

For a moment there, unreadable expressions floated up onto the faces of my companions. A heavy silence descended on the flowing waters of Tongtian River.

Another bolt of lightning crashed down, and Jeong Hui-Won lightly jumped off from the top of the ship's cabin.

I thought that her shoulders trembled imperceptibly as her feet landed on deck, but they regained their calmness soon after.

[Everyone able to participate in the voting has agreed with the judgement.]

['Hour of Judgement' is activating!]

Jeong Hui-Won slowly raised her head and opened her lips to speak.

"We can still fight."

Fin.

'Can still fight'.

Jeong Hui-Won declared as thus and stepped forward while emitting calm, still Status.

Meanwhile, [Nebula Chat] messages entered my ear.

- Dok-Ja hyung is still alive.

Yi Gil-Yeong said that.

- He may not be here, but he's still looking at us from somewhere.

Shin Yu-Seung nodded her head.

On the other hand, a warning message was resounding in my head.

[Outer God transformation rate: 96.1%]

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[Outer God transformation rate: 96.3%]

The rate was suddenly climbing up rapidly.

[The Wenny King is doubting the agreement you two have made.]

The reason why I didn't immediately transform into an 'Outer God' was because, even though my companions knew that the 'Demon King of Salvation' was alive somewhere, they didn't know that the person playing Sun Wukong, me, was their real 'Demon King

of Salvation'.

My deal with the Wenny King stated that I should not reveal myself to the , after all.

[Outer God transformation rate: 97.1%]

Perhaps something was in his mind, because Yu Jung-Hyeok was silently staring up at the sky. Jeong Hui-Won placed her hand on his shoulder and walked forward.

He spoke in a weighty voice. "… You alone will not be sufficient."

"No, I'm more than enough."

Her refreshing grin imparted the feeling of her being utterly dependable right now.

[Exclusive skill, 'Hour of Judgement', has received 's blessing.]

Her [Hour of Judgement] was no longer influenced by or those sitting on the

'Absolute Good' spectrum. Her blade now only needed to borrow from 's Probability, and it was currently pointing at the targets of her judgement.

[Nebula, , is unhappy at the unannounced participation of the applicable role!]

The members from seemed to be taken aback by Jeong Hui-Won's sudden intrusion.

Fei Hu tilted his head and stared at her. "And who you might be?"

"Was it you?"

"…?"

"The one who was looking for Korea's best Incarnation."

Right at the end of those words, Jeong Hui-Won's figure dashed forward like an arrow.

Fei Hu panicked and quickly raised his Ruyi Bang, blocking her sword strike just in time. The friction sound of "Kwa-du-duk!" resounding out was unusually heavy.

He frowned deeply as his body slid back quite some ways. "That is a pretty heavy sword. However, that isn't the 'Bull Demon King's' weapon, is it?"

"Correct."

Jeong Hui-Won's hands were gripping a Steelsword that no one had seen before. It was not the Bull Demon King's weapon, or for that matter, Jeong Hui-Won's own [Sword of Judgement], either.

[Player 10-nim is participating in 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」

as an 'Extra'!]

…Ng?

[Player 10-nim's role is 'Ruyi Jingu Bang'.]

Just as I began thinking that such a role shouldn't even be possible, her sword suddenly extended in an abnormal fashion. It was like watching the actual Ruyi Jingu Bang that weighed thirteen thousand and five hundred 'geun'.

"What is this…?!"

Her sword continued to extend. Ten metres, twenty, thirty, forty… Her hands tightly grasped the sword that grew to a truly nonsensical length.

[Exclusive skill, 'God Slaying Lv.3', is activating!]

The 'God Slaying', the higher-ranked skill derived from 'Demon Slaying' after she evolved into the 'Judge of Apocalypse'.

The violent power of Chaos flowed viciously within the Steelsword, now hundreds of metres long. The world seemed to vibrate slowly, and her hands moved from left to right.

Fei Hu sensed something deeply ominous at that moment and loudly shouted out towards the other Constellations. "Evacuate, now!!"

Some managed to reflexively escape, but the majority didn't even know what befell them.

A single silvery line drew along the impressively-vast river's surface, and every single battleship in the vicinity exploded into bits and pieces in a loud screech.

[Nebula, , is astonished by the strength of 'Bull Demon King'!]

The truly gob-smacking firepower that could set the surface of water ablaze, turning it into a sea of flames with just one attack.

That wasn't Jeong Hui-Won's power alone.

The Steelsword vibrated within her hands. I recognised that weapon right away.

Although it was impossible to talk to the guy since he had entered weapon mode via

[Steel Transformation], he was without a doubt, Yi Hyeon-Seong.

Jeong Hui-Won ran on the burning surface of the river and shouted back at us.

"Go! Leave this place to me!"

She not only stopped Fei Hu's advance, but also that of Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha.

Having sensed the enormous fighting spirit flooding out from her entire figure, I looked back at my companions and spoke up. "Let's get going."

For sure, I'd be able to leave this battle to the current Jeong Hui-Won.

"Do your best, noona!"

"You should escape if things look bad!"

Yi Ji-Hye's phantom ship quickly disembarked.

Behind us, Fei Hu was roaring out in anger after being blocked by Jeong Hui-Won. We didn't care and continued to scythe past the Tongtian's dense fog. We then spotted Fei Hu's Tang Sanzang hurriedly escaping up ahead of us.

[Location of the sacred texts is close by.]

We could sense the gazes of the audience and the judges on top of us.

[Many in the audience are focusing on your Fable.]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is telling you to work a little bit harder.]

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is cheering on as his belly fat jiggles around.]

[100 additional points have been awarded.]

Thanks to Yi Ji-Hye and Jeong Hui-Won's hard work, the point gap between Fei Hu's chamber and ours had pretty much disappeared.

If we manage to scoop up the 'sacred texts' first, then we should become the winner of 「Journey to the West Remake」.

It was right then that the skies of all four cardinal directions distorted.

[Nebula, 's 28 Mansions, are making their descent!]

From all directions of the blackened sky, 28 stars shot down to where we were.

"Evade it!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok and I each grabbed Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung, and flung ourselves into the river. Along with the explosive noise of the Tongtian itself blowing up, our phantom ship shattered and sunk beneath the water.

We found debris floating on the river's surface and managed to barely grab hold of it.

"Woo-ehck! Hey, I can survive by myself, so let me go!"

Yi Gil-Yeong kicked around and shouted out.

We stepped on to our own floating debris. And in the meantime, 28 stars were blocking our way forward.

[What an incomprehensible bunch of people.]

[Why do you stain this noble story with the blood of Yogoes?]

[You're not qualified to complete this 'Great Fable'.]

They were openly declaring their intentions to hinder us.

I expected this to happen, but now that had come out like this, I couldn't help but feel dismayed somewhat.

[A portion of the audience members are complaining about the unfairness to the Constellations of !]

Lodging complaints wouldn't change anything. Whatever the case might have been, the 'Journey to the West' was 's Great Fable, and they wouldn't want to lose it to other Nebulas.

From the get-go, this event was created for the Incarnation of , Fei Hu.

The only reason why other Incarnations and Constellations were allowed to participate was simply to enhance the status of the entire Fable itself and turn this event into a proper scenario.

This was a game where Fei Hu had been decided as its final winner beforehand.

As for the ensuing dissatisfaction of Constellations and their Nebulas, simply supplying them with Coins and adequate-enough Fables as compensations would calm them down pretty quickly. That was the truth behind this -planned

「Journey to the West Remake」, and other Constellations already had some idea without being explicitly told about it.

Even if you participate, you can't win. But we will compensate you accordingly.

[Why do you insist on disrupting the order of the scenario? You have already climbed up to second place, yet are you still not satisfied by the number of votes?]

In that regard, it was the same thing as us already crossing that unspoken line that

had drawn.

[It's not too late to back down. If you do, we will not confiscate the Fable you have compiled up to this point.]

One of the directions of the 28 Mansions, 'Seven Mansions of the Azure Dragon of the East' – Horn Mansion, Neck Mansion, Root Mansion, Room Mansion, Heart Mansion, Tail Mansion, Winnowing Basket Mansion – stepped forward and unleashed their Status.

The strengths of the individual Constellations hovered between bottom-tiered Fable-grade or Historical-grade, but the real problem was when they were together like this.

Azure Dragon of the East, 7 Mansions.

Black Tortoise of the North, 7 Mansions.

White Tiger of the West, 7 Mansions.

Vermilion Bird of the South, 7 Mansions.

These were the guardian Constellations tasked with defending , as well as the enforcer of the Jade Emperor himself.

Even back in the 'Journey to the West', they got into conflict with the Great Sage Heaven's Equal.

['Constellations of 28 Mansions' are unleashing their Status!]

When 28 stars all released their light simultaneously, the waves of truly blinding Status smashed into us in full. Even if they were individually nothing more than Historical-grade, with that much aura…

Shu-ru-rung.

Yu Jung-Hyeok unsheathed his sword and stepped forward. He glanced at me as he did so. "Take the kids away and acquire the sacred texts."

That prompted Yi Gil-Yeong to shout out as if he was having a breakdown. "Who's taking who here?! I…!"

The boy's lips snapped shut after he sensed Yu Jung-Hyeok emitting his Status.

His jet-black coat danced in the air. It was as if he had suddenly transformed into a black hole; his back faced us as he stood there against the lights shining from 28 stars.

That was the back of a man who had been silently protecting certain people.

Yi Gil-Yeong faltered a little after being overwhelmed by that and muttered out softly.

"… Let's go."

Even if it was Yu Jung-Hyeok, there was no guarantee of victory against the entirety of the Constellations of the 28 Mansions. However, we had no choice but to believe him.

The current him was strong enough to fight against 's best, Indra.

I nodded my head and replied. "Do your best."

"Get going!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] carved out a path on the border where the river and the sky met.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Inner Mysteries.

Split the Dark Ocean.

One sword strike that cut the ocean of the night. Like the miracle of Moses, the river's water dispersed and the pathway to the front split apart.

Several stars failed to dodge the strike in time, and they were sunk under the water as a consequence.

[How can such a nonsensical Status be…!]

[You bastard!]

The astonished 28 Mansions roared out and quickly scattered. Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't wait and continued to swing his sword about during that space of time.

Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword.

A make-shift raft made out of floating debris was dashing forward on the road created by Yu Jung-Hyeok's lightning.

"Chimera Dragon!"

The Dragon Horse powerfully flapped its wings. A powerful gust of wind caused the raft containing me, Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung to shoot forward. Even though the number of passengers had decreased, the speed of the voyage was so great that it

actually consumed Chimera Dragon's Status. The distance to Fei Hu's Tang Sanzang decreased in an instant.

They discovered us overtaking them and began shouting in our

direction. Yi Gil-Yeong flipped them a middle finger, instead. "Why don't you munch on this!"

[Nebula, 's Lords of the Nine Stars, are descending to the scenario!]

"Dang it! More's coming? What a cheat!"

wasn't a great Nebula for nothing.

Simply from the number of 'Constellations' alone, could easily be called the 's strongest Nebula.

The heavens before our eyes split open along with descending rays of light, and nine indistinct humanoid figures appeared. They could be distinguished only through their different individual colours.

The Lords of Nine Stars.

They were automated combat weapons of , created by condensed Fables.

Each one was a weapon possessing as much combat capability as a 'Fable-grade'

Constellation, where seven heavenly bodies – the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn – plus the Solar and Lunar Eclipses, had become anthropomorphised.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwakwa!

Particle cannons fired from the mouths of the weapons burned one half of Tongtian, while the other half was frozen solid.

The moment I went, "Dammit!", a single streak of light flew out from the thick wall of rising steam.

"Shin Yu-Seung!"

She was focused on controlling the Dragon Horse and couldn't dodge in time; her figure was flung up into the air. Yi Gil-Yeong and I reached out at the same time to reel her back in and place her on the back of the Horse. Perhaps the attack has struck her vital point, because she was knocked unconscious.

"Those sons of bitches…!"

Yi Gil-Yeong took over the control of the Dragon Horse and unleashed his own Status.

However, the Lords of the Nine Stars were still perfectly fine, and to make matters worse, they weren't our only problems.

[Nebula, 's Twelve Star Lords, are preparing to descend!]

[Nebula, 's Dragon Kings of the Four Seas, are preparing to descend!]

I finally realised the truth by then. was dead serious about this 'Great Fable'.

[Outer God transformation rate: 98.1%]

The enemy's battleship overtook us and shot forward again.

[Many audience members are looking at you with great anticipation!]

[Currently, the difference in voting score between you and the first ranked chamber is negligible!]

If we lose here, the Great Fable would become Fei Hu's.

I turned to look at Yi Gil-Yeong and spoke to him. "Xuan High Priest-nim."

"I'm busy, so don't talk to me!"

"Please protect Zang High Priest-nim here. I shall break past them and retrieve the sacred texts."

"What? What are you…"

He failed to comprehend the situation and was about to shout out, but before he could, I placed my hand on top of his head first.

"You understand? Gil-Yeong-ah."

Fin.

For a moment there, Yi Gil-Yeong's lips bobbed up and down. Tears rapidly welled up in the boy's clear eyes.

"Y-you, you…”

I finished patting his head and dragged a nearby piece of floating debris to me.

(Sun Wukong fired a wind-type magic behind him.)

[Exclusive skill, 'Way of the Wind Lv.10', is activating!]

Along with the gust of wind, the debris, with me as its passenger, shot forward at a rapid pace. Yi Gil-Yeong's voice called out to me from behind, but it was buried under the noise of the rushing winds.

[Someone in the is suspecting your real identity.]

[The Wenny King is glaring at you!]

The Nine Stars noticed my movement and began pursuing me instead. A couple of them even shot past me, rather than stopping me here.

I spotted the location of the 'sacred texts' in the distance. A single book emitting beautiful light rested on top of a small island shrouded in a mysterious fog.

And also, the Nine Stars and 's Constellations were standing before it.

I sighed softly under my breath.

[Outer God transformation rate: 98.3%]

[Damage to your Incarnation Body is critical.]

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There was only one remaining method now.

Out of the blue, Yu Jung-Hyeok [999] maintaining his silence on my shoulder spoke up.

- This is an idiotic move. Do you wish to become an 'Outer God'?

I broke out in a smirk.

'Are you scared?'

- If you force yourself any further, you will really become an 'Outer God'. If you do, you'll fail this scenario.

I accessed the scenario window to confirm my goal.

Type: Hidden

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Introduce 'Outer Gods' to the 's main Great Fable.

However, they must not be introduced in the existing role of 'Outer Gods' as before.

Time limit: 100 days

Reward: Outer Gods' trust, ???

Failure: You will lose all of your memories and transform into an Outer God.

* During the progress of the applicable scenario, you must not contact and reveal your identity. If this condition is violated, the transformation into an 'Outer God' will accelerate.

* Warning! Your identity is on the verge of being discovered.

* Currently, the rate of Outer God transformation is accelerating due to the poor condition of your Incarnation Body.

+

As I thought, reading it again only confirmed my suspicion.

'Even if I become an Outer God, I still won't fail the scenario. Becoming one is simply the 'penalty' for failing the scenario, not the 'condition' leading to its failure.'

- There is no difference between the…

'No, it is different. I'll be turning into an Outer God first before failing the scenario itself.'

The time limit of the 'Hidden Scenario' I got from the Wenny King was 100 days.

Meaning, I only had to accomplish my task in that time frame.

The problem had to do with the 'transformation into an Outer God' bit.

"The reason why I'm transforming quickly into an Outer God isn't that I failed the scenario, but due to the bad condition of my Incarnation Body. So…"

-… You won't fail the scenario even if you become an 'Outer God'. Is that it?

'Right.'

I nodded my head and studied our immediate front. It seemed that [999] had finally realised what my goal was.

[Shares of 'Outer God' in the applicable Fable currently is 12.171%.]

[In order to complete the scenario, you must secure over 30% of the shares for 'Outer God'.]

At this rate, I'd not be able to meet that goal even if I got my hands on the sacred texts and acquire the Great Fable. However, what if I became an Outer God…?

[Your role in the applicable Fable is 'Sun Wukong'.]

[Your share in the applicable Fable is 22.51%.]

What if the role of the greatest Yogoe, 'Sun Wukong', was played by an Outer God, and

what if my goal was accomplished by doing so…?

- Why are you willing to go this far?

'What do you mean?'

- You won't lose anything even if you let the 'Secretive Plotter' or Outer Gods be on their own.

'Won't lose anything… '

- Are you by any chance pitying the 'Secretive Plotter'? He doesn't need sympathy from a fool like you.

'I'm sure that's the case. He's Yu Jung-Hyeok, after all.'

- Yu Jung-Hyeok? Don't make me laugh. He's not the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'

you think you know. He has already become a completely different 'something'.

I didn't reply to him. [999] continued on as he scanned the Constellations of

rushing towards us.

- You don't understand what it means to become an 'Outer God'. Once you become one, you rapidly lose all the memories you have accumulated in your life. Even the

'Secretive Plotter' had to create 'ports' like myself in order to endu…

So, that was the reason why these 'kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks' existed, I see.

I lightly nodded my head and replied.

'I know what I'll have to pay.'

- In that case, why…!

'Because… I have to do it.'

I replied with a simple grin.

I slowly blinked, and during those short moments of darkness, the figures of the 'Outer Gods' brushed past my mind.

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[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[SavemeSavemeSavemSavemeSaveme]

[MymemoriesMymemoriesMymemories]

The Outer Gods.

Creatures born out of all the countless world-lines where Yu Jung-Hyeok had failed.

The worlds that allowed me to live on until now. The traces of the worlds that I loved so much.

'How can I make any other choice after seeing the truth?'

Especially so, when I could still clearly hear them even now?

Kuwaaaaaah!

An energy blast destroyed the log I was riding on. But I simply ran on the surface of the water by using the scattered debris.

['Way of the Wind' is accelerating even further.]

[Way of the Wind' is evolving due to your speed that has reached its limit.]

My leg speed gradually picked up and soon, I began running on the water without the debris serving as footholds.

[You have understood the pinnacle of 'Walking on Water'.]

[Due to the usage of an excessive amount of Status, the damage to your Incarnation Body has worsened!]

[Outer God transformation rate: 98.6%]

My heart began pounding away in an ominous rhythm.

[Outer God transformation rate: 98.7%]

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That beating noise, it was the sound of me becoming something that was no longer

'me'.

[999] said something to me, but I couldn't hear him as the river exploded all around us. What I did hear, though, was another voice coming from the inside.

「Kim Dok Ja.」

[The 4th Wall] was talking to me.

「Thi s is in sa ne.」

It seemed that this guy had also been observing everything until now. But that was pretty obvious.

「Y ou w ill forg et ev eryt hing.」

「Kim Dok Ja no lo nge r w ill be Kim Dok Ja.」

[The 4th Wall] was right.

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.1%]

Once I become an 'Outer God', I'd lose every memory I acquired until now.

「Kim Dok-Ja was scared.」

It was a horrifying prospect when I thought about it.

「To lose all the memories he had made until this moment.」

I looked at the paragraphs rising above the wall and spoke up.

'It'll be fine. Because you remember everything, right?'

「Wha t?」

'You've recorded everything about me, so I'll never forget about myself.'

The normal me wouldn't have tried something like this. I'd never want to experience losing all my memories, after all.

['The 4th Wall' is greatly shaken up!]

However, I possessed [The 4th Wall]. I had no idea how I acquired this skill, but nevertheless, this Wall recorded everything the moment this story began.

I recalled the sight beyond the Wall – the Library shrouded in forlorn yet cosy darkness, as well as the Librarians that greatly cared about the place.

The important story of the 'Ways of Survival' that contained every Yu Jung-Hyeok regression turn had been recorded there, and…

…Even the unimportant life of 'Kim Dok-Ja' was recorded there, as well.

「That Library was recording everything about Kim Dok-Ja, even in this very moment.」

「Kim Dok-Ja's breaths, his appearance, his laughter, and his manner of speech.」

「The food Kim Dok-Ja likes and the ones he dislikes. Songs he hummed occasionally.

Expressions he makes when he's sad or happy. His habit of muttering to himself when he's not feeling confident, and the ensuing self-deprecation.」

「His habit of leaning his head slightly when worrying about the kids. The slight twitch of his eyelids as he closes his eyes after thinking about his mother. The smile he makes whenever he's talking to Yu Sang-Ah. His arcing eyebrows and naughty smile whenever he's making fun of Han Su-Yeong. The guilt when he thinks about Yi Hyeon-Seong. And… 」

「The glint in his eyes when he recalls the story he loves.」

That was why I could say it openly like this.

'I can just read from the beginning again.'

「B u t」

'From the moment the subway arrived, all the way up to when I arrived here in the Journey to the West. I can just read them all again.'

The shell made out of light, fired from afar, landed near my feet.

I was swept away in the explosion of light and sunk into the water below. I flailed about and grabbed hold of a piece of nearby floating debris.

[Damage to your Incarnation Body is critical!]

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.3%]

I stood up and ran again.

I really had only a little more remaining.

'Because I love reading the most in this world, after all.'

Breathing got heavier and harder.

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.4%]

It felt as if my memories were beginning to scatter away already, bit by bit.

A spear fired by one of the Nine Stars brushed past my shoulder. But the pain shooting up didn't even feel like it belonged to me.

At that moment, I inexplicably recalled a post I made a long time ago in the online community portal.

- I'm looking for eyes that haven't read the 'Ways of Survival' yet.

I felt really bummed about the fact that the story I loved so much was coming to an end and so, posted such a thing online. Recalling it made me smile ever so faintly.

'To think that I'd forget about such an entertaining story and read it

from the beginning again. That'll be a good thing in my case, actually.'

「Kim Dok Ja is an id iot.」

As if it was angry, [The 4th Wall] yelled back.

「I wo n't t ell y ou an yth ing.」

Even if it was saying that, I knew it'd help me out anyway.

「I w on't fo rgi ve y ou forg etting」

My skin was ripped up from the barrage of the firestorm and the pain akin to my back snapping in half tore through me.

[Exclusive skill, 'The 4th Wall', is strongly activating!]

And such pain was being blocked by [The 4th Wall].

I swung my fist at the Nine Stars pouncing on me. My knuckles ached as if they were punching hardened steel, but I didn't back off.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

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[Setting of, 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」, is activating.]

[Due to the 'Retirement Penalty', your will to fight has decreased.]

[Due to the 'Retirement Penalty', you can't use all of your strength.]

…Come to think of it, I forgot about that stupid setting being in place.

All the power of the Fables wrapped around my body were quickly abandoning me.

[Block him!]

[He must not reach the sacred texts!]

The ruins housing the 'sacred texts' were right before my eyes. It was an island made out of granite, a treasure that withstood the hardships of a lengthy amount of time.

The 'answer' that Tang Sanzang and his companions acquired after 14 years of journeying was there.

[Many audience members are looking at your Fable.]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is waiting for your choice.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is waiting for your answer.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is studying your Fable.]

[Judge, 'Sakyamuni's Successor', is looking at you.]

Everyone on this ride along with me was staring at this very moment together.

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.7%]

The Nine Stars desperately blocked my path. Fei Hu's Tang Sanzang was hurriedly running towards the 'sacred texts' in the meantime.

If I wasted any more time here, then more Constellations from would arrive and I'd not be able to retrieve the sacred texts.

[Score: 50412]

[Ranking of the applicable Fable chamber is 1st.]

I looked up into the sky.

[Scenario Master is looking at you.]

For some reason, I had this feeling that, if it was her, she should've realised it a long time ago.

That she knew already who I really was.

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And why… I had to keep my identity a secret from my companions.

For some reason, I had this baseless hunch that she knew everything but decided to feign ignorance until now.

And then, the Scenario Master's voice came to me next.

(…Goddammit.)

I smirked after hearing that. As the Constellations rushed at me, a new narration began to unfold.

(Sun Wukong looked at his enemies.)

(He had already fought against them in his previous life.)

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.8%]

(All those tiresome battles.)

(He was a retired man, and he swore that he'd never fight again. However…) I blinked my eyes while listening to the narration that sounded like a lovingly-crafted letter.

Right, if it was you, I knew you'd have figured it out already.

…Figured out how this story would conclude.

(As he slowly clenched his fists, strength from a long time ago welled up uncontrollably.)

[Your 'Retirement Penalty' has been completely removed.]

(Heaven's Equal, the power to control the clouds and lightning of the sky.)

[Fifth Bookmark has been initiated!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Lightning Transformation Lv.23(+13), has been initiated.]

[Your 'Status' is overcoming the physique requirement penalty.]

Pure-white physical energy swirled around; the electrical arcs from the [Lightning Transformation] tore into the heavens above and destroyed the stars of the Lords of the Nine Stars.

(He was called the 'Saviour' because he saved many with his fists. And he was called the 'Demon King' because he killed many living creatures.) Jet-black wings tore out of my shoulder blades.

(And that was why he was the 'Demon King of Salvation'.) (These were memories of the distant past.)

I shifted my gaze back and saw the corpses of Outer Gods dyeing the Tongtian River's waters.

(Back when he reigned supreme at the zenith of all 'Yogoes'.) (He ruled Yogoes, he fought, and in the end, was defeated.) (The lengthy journey changed him, and through his awakening, he became a Buddha.) They had died as the expendables for the sake of this scenario.

(And this was the result of his awakening.)

The headband on my head began hurting me. Even when suffering from this pain, I still dashed forward.

Powerful Constellations of pounced on me next.

[Stop him!]

[He must never lay his hands on the sacred…!!]

(For the sake of all the Yogoes that died…)

(He decided to become the 'Demon King of Salvation' one more time.)

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', is revealing his Status.]

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Every Constellation before my eyes was flung away as blinding light exploded. And beyond that light, a single book was waiting for me.

I reached out towards the 'sacred texts'.

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.9%]

[Your existence is evolving into an 'Outer God'.]

Fin.

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The boiling power of Chaos encroached into the blood vessels in my entire body. One by one, Fables began resisting against the invasion of this foreign power.

[Fable, 'One who opposes Miracles, dreams of miracles.]

[Fable, 'One who Murdered an Outer God', is resisting against your change!]

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is protecting you!]

I barely managed to hold onto my wavering consciousness and staggered towards the sacred texts.

「… 」

I thought I heard voices coming from somewhere, which could've been a side effect of transforming into an Outer God. I figured that my consciousness breaking apart somehow automatically activated [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint].

However, it wasn't only one person this time; as if I was seeing many people's POVs, several voices came at me at the same time.

「… I already knew.」

That was Yu Jung-Hyeok.

「It was just too obvious from the get-go, you know. I thought that it might as well be.」

Yi Ji-Hye.

「If he didn't tell us up-front, then he must've had his reasons.」

Shin Yu-Seung.

「I, I already was suspecting it too, you know?! D-Dok-Ja hyung! Dok-Ja hyung!!」

Yi Gil-Yeong.

「… Dok-Ja-ssi?」

Jeong Hui-Won.

To these folks who understood it all already without being told – just what could I possibly say to them?

「What a powerful Sun Wukong he is… Who could he be?」

…That was Yi Hyeon-Seong.

I ended up smirking softly.

Right, maybe it's for the best that he doesn't find out.

I sensed my memories beginning to crumble away. Once the transformation into an Outer God was over, all of my memories should scatter away like cosmic dust.

「Kim Dok-Ja was scared.」

[The 4th Wall] probably was aware of it already – that big talk of mine was nothing more than just a coward pretending to be tough.

「After losing all my memories will I still remain as 'me'?」

I did die a few times so far, but never have I lost all of my memories. What would happen to the 'me' that remembers everything, from here onwards?

[What really scared him was not death.]

Even if I got to read them all again, would I be able to regain the emotions I felt back then in full?

[Fable, 'Comrade of Life and Death', is looking at you.]

[Fable, 'One who Hunted the King of Calamities', is looking at you.]

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[Fable, 'Liberator of Giants', is looking at you.]

Would I really be able to feel the same emotions that I felt during the acquisition of all these precious stories?

「And finally, the 'sacred texts' were waiting for Kim Dok-Ja right before his eyes.」

The [Journey to the West Remake].

That book was the 'Great Fable' itself. The moment I grasp it, this Great Fable would become 's, as well as the Outer Gods.

「Kim Dok-Ja reached out towards the 'sacred texts'.」

With this, we'd be able to complete this [Journey to the West].

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

It was at this moment that something strange happened.

[Due to the unexpected event in the scenario, your transformation into the Outer God is being delayed.]

…It's being delayed?

Sparks exploding all around me got even more violent while the roars from the Constellations grew further away. The flow of space-time was being warped strangely.

Probability so powerful that it gave me chills and back-wetting goosebumps was being mobilised. It felt as if the entirety of the was writhing around.

Someone was intruding into the scenario by breaking through the distorted space.

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoju', has incarnated to the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoche', has incarnated to the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Harong', has incarnated to the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Haram', has incarnated to the scenario!]

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[Great Dokkaebi, 'Haesol', has incarnated to the scenario!]

Several Great Dokkaebis were incarnating before my eyes.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchut!

As if it had turned into stone, my hand reaching out towards the 'sacred texts' froze up in place.

This shouldn't be happening.

[You cannot acquire that story.]

Dokkaebis weren't able to interfere with the main scenarios.

No, actually, some did try indirectly to pick fights with us, but there had never been an instance where a Dokkaebi with "Great" as its classification personally distorted a scenario like this.

However, these ones had betted away their Probability and did indeed intervene with the scenario.

[is violently convulsing!]

Great Dokkaebis were also a part of the .

Even if they were tasked with controlling the system, they were not

exempt from the consequences of abnormally abusing the Probability.

Perhaps that was the reason why the powerful sparks were dancing around wildly on the bodies of the Great Dokkaebis.

[The forgotten ones need to remain forgotten.]

I thought I could understand just a little why they were willing to go this far. If I took the 'sacred texts' and acquired the 'Great Fable' in the process…

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[OhOhOhOhOhOh…!]

Then, the Outer Gods they had been excluding from the story would officially be incorporated into a 'Great Fable'.

Outer Gods were beings that couldn't be controlled fully by the system they possessed.

Never mind the mid-to-lower grade [Old Beings], if the higher-ranked Outer Gods were to enter the scenarios indiscriminately, then the would fall into unbridled chaos.

Even then, I simply had to complete this task.

[Give up.]

Statuses from the Great Dokkaebis had tied my entire body down like chains, and my fingertips reaching out to the 'sacred texts' came to a dead stop only a single hand span away. However, I didn't get flustered.

As the Great Dokkaebis appeared here while going against the Probability, there's was no doubt that another creature tasked with fixing the tilted balance of the distorted Probability would appear

soon.

Ku-gugugugu!!

Speak of the devil – a whirlpool suddenly formed in the middle of the sky. It was the

[Great Hole]. And an existence revealed itself and looked down at me from beyond the opening.

[Take the 'sacred texts', oh apostle of ■■.]

It was none other than the Wenny King, the one I met back in the N'Gai's Forest.

Great Dokkaebis discovered the Wenny's presence and roared out in sheer astonishment.

[How dare…!]

[The devil of the horizon, how dare you show yourself here!]

[You do not possess the Probability to appear in this scenario!]

The Wenny King sneered back at them. [It's the same story for you, too.]

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The Statuses of the Great Dokkaebis and the Wenny King collided, and my previously-restrained body regained its freedom. And my hand crossed that final distance.

[Outer God transformation has resumed.]

The Wenny King smiled brightly.

[Oh, dear . The worlds you have erased shall advance once more.]

The moment my hand touched the 'sacred texts', my consciousness

faded away within the brightly-lit storm of electricity.

I could barely sense what might happen from here onwards.

I looked behind me and slowly closed my eyes.

「The only thing he could trust now was… 」

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Showers of light exploded and scattered in the distant sky.

Even the Nine Stars, even the 28 Mansions – they all had no choice but to look at the explosion in that moment.

[Every Constellation of the Nebula, , is freaking out!]

Yi Gil-Yeong atop the Dragon Horse was busy evading the Nine Stars' attack until then, but even he had to bring his mount to a stop.

“…Shin Yu-Seung?"

Shin Yu-Seung regained her consciousness and opened her eyes on top of the saddle.

The moment she did, her eyes quickly snapped towards the western sky where Yi Gil-Yeong was also looking at.

Her heart was beating powerfully.

[Something has gone wrong. Eliminate these small fries quickly, and…]

The Lords of the Nine Stars and 's Historical Figure-grade Constellations recovered from their fluster and hurriedly rushed towards Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung once more.

The boy spoke up, his gaze still fixed to the western skies. "I'll create a

path, so get going."

No one needed to explain it to them. The story they were searching for was over there.

"Go and rescue Dok-Ja hyung!"

That was where Kim Dok-Ja was.

Shin Yu-Seung could sense it. Maybe, far better than anyone out there.

Just as Yi Gil-Yeong jumped off from the Dragon Horse and unleashed his Status, Shin Yu-Seung made her mount break out into a dash. The horse reverted back to the Jade Dragon and flew forward like a speedboat on the river's surface. A nostalgic scent of a Fable wafted in from the distance.

That's where she could see the starlight from her Sponsor that protected her for a long time.

It was shining so brightly like that, yet… why hadn't she been sure of it before?

Countless questions raged on in her head before slipping away.

Why was Kim Dok-Ja in this place?

Why didn't he reveal his true identity to anyone?

Shin Yu-Seung couldn't answer any of that. However…

…She felt that if Kim Dok-Ja was lost again in that place, she'd never be able to see him ever again.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Beams of light fired by the Nine Stars slammed into the Dragon Horse. Shin Yu-Seung screamed as she plunged into the river water.

However, there were creatures that dragged her back out of the water.

[KimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokja]

[WeareWeareWeareWeareWeare]

From when did this happen? Yogoes that had been previously floating around gathered into a large group and were crossing the river.

Somehow, she ended up on top of the group. Yogoes were floating up like stepping stones and created the path forward.

[SavehimSavehimSavehimSavehimSavehim]

And as Shin Yu-Seung ran on top of the Yogoes, she belatedly realised it.

「The reason why ahjussi is here, it's for the sake of these guys.」

The moment she realised it, something welled up from deep inside her.

She saw Kim Dok-Ja's Fable scattering away within the blinding rays of light.

She didn't need anyone to explain to her that he was clearly in serious danger right now.

「Why does ahjussi, always alone…!」

The first emotion she felt was resentment.

Why didn't Kim Dok-Ja ask his companions for help?

「There must've been a reason for that.」

She knew that. But…

「He probably thought that this is for the best.」

Even then, there were some things that remained difficult to accept.

It was the same story back in the Dark Castle, and also in the Demon World. And even

during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', too. Their lengthy scenario was simply Kim Dok-Ja's history of continued sacrifices.

「And that was why this resentment wasn't directed at Kim Dok-Ja, but towards Shin Yu-Seung herself.」

She was none other than Kim Dok-Ja's Incarnation and that's why she felt this sadness.

The pain she was experiencing right now was nothing when compared to his determination.

「For sure, Kim Dok-Ja would've said something like "Yu-Seung-ah, listen. There's no

'weight' to sadness."」

Shin Yu-Seung didn't agree with those words.

Sadness did indeed have 'weight'.

The despair of a person risking his life trying to save someone else, and another's grief borne from powerlessness while watching that feat unfold, would never carry equal weight.

In the end, to every human being, the most precious thing was themselves.

And Kim Dok-Ja risked everything of his, always.

It was right at that time that the river water suddenly exploded in front of her eyes.

Constellations of vomited out as they crashed back down to earth.

[Come, you disappeared stories!]

Accompanied by the voice reverberating throughout the world, the entire world began changing.

Several [Great Holes] opened up in the various parts of the sky, and

creatures possessing unimaginable Statuses started to cross over.

They were no longer the 'Outer Gods'.

[■?■?■■ is participating in the role of 'Extra'!]

[■■?■ is participating in the role of 'Extra'!]

They were Yogoes from the Journey to the West.

(This was the final war to determine the owner of the 'sacred texts'.)
(The horde of shadowy demonic beings rushed in to put the finishing touches to the final pages of this lengthy tale.)

A spectacle akin to the world meeting its annihilation played out.

And in the centre of that apocalypse, Kim Dok-Ja with his two blank eyes was wandering among the Yogoes.

Was Shin Yu-Seung mistaken when she thought that he no longer seemed to be 'Kim Dok-Ja', but a Yogoe?

'I need to stop him.'

On top of the broken Yogoes' path, Shin Yu-Seung looked down at her small hand. It was a hand that she believed was capable of achieving things far greater than any adult could. And it had done precisely that many times before. However, at least in this moment…

…She felt that it was nothing but a child's small hand.

[■■■■■■■■■■■■…!!]

The heavens split up and the ground caved in. The Tongtian River's waters overturned in its entirety, and the living creatures atop it died in their droves as blood and Fables flooded out.

[Judge, 'Sakyamuni's Successor', is looking at you.]

It was exactly then that she felt someone's gaze and heard that person's voice.

[Yu-Seung-ah, only you can do it.]

It was a voice she knew so well.

"Sang-Ah unni??"

[At this rate, Dok-Ja-ssi won't be able to come back. Only you can prevent that.]

There was not enough time to ask how something like this was possible. So, Shin Yu-Seung only asked the necessary question first. "What, what should I do?"

Yu Sang-Ah didn't answer her right away. However, what she did say sounded like a Buddha bringing up a new topic for a conversation.

[Do not forget your role.]

Shin Yu-Seung stared momentarily at the sky in stupefaction, before her gaze shifted over to Kim Dok-Ja's direction. A golden headband glowed faintly on top of Sun Wukong's head.

She looked down at her fist again. It was still that of a little child's. But at the same time, it was the fist of 'Tang Sanzang', as well.

“…Can I really do it?"

Her voice was trembling.

Kim Dok-Ja's figure staggered about in the distance.

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', is continuing with its storytelling.]

Finally, the tears she was holding back broke free. "But, that could be what ahjussi wants, you know?"

And to such a child, Yu Sang-Ah spoke.

[He has been alone for a very long time.]

Kim Dok-Ja (□獨子).

[To someone like that, telling him that he's not alone a few times won't suddenly change anything.]

Shin Yu-Seung was Kim Dok-Ja's Incarnation.

[You need to tell him, always be next to him, and reaffirm it for him.]

As she cried, Shin Yu-Seung stepped forward.

[Until he realises that he's truly not alone anymore.]

She gathered every little scrap of her Status and began running hard. Just like Kim Dok-Ja using the [Way of the Wind], she too gave everything she had and ran on top of the river.

While stepping on the water's surface sinking in bit by bit, Shin Yu-Seung shouted out loudly as if to tear out her vocal cords.

"Ahjussi!!"

Kim Dok-Ja wasn't listening. In the midst of the bloody battle between Yogoes and the Constellations, he was looking back at her with empty eyes as he slowly morphed into another Yogoe.

His body was changing. Kim Dok-Ja was scattering away.

"Don't go! Please!! Please don't go!"

She watched her Sponsor slowly disappear right before her eyes and shouted even louder and louder. It didn't sound like words, but screams, instead. These were things that couldn't be conveyed with mere words.

[A brand new Fable is sprouting within you!]

Not everyone could use special methods to communicate, and that was why Fables existed. Words that couldn't be conveyed would become stories eventually.

The golden letters of the Constrictive Sutra had become a Fable and they began emitting bright light now.

「I'm not going to give up. Just like how you keep rescuing me, ahjussi, I…!」

As the meteors rained down all around her, Shin Yu-Seung looked straight at her 'star'

and told her tale.

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「I'll definitely save you, too.」

Fin.

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The sounds of explosions spread out from the centre of the battlefield. The surrounding atmosphere was going through a change.

Ranks of Yogoes were rushing over there and 's Constellations continued to descend.

Fei Hu's eyes chased after those ranks before shifting back to the enemy blocking his path. "… You're truly strong. Are there more Incarnations like you in Korea?"

Jeong Hui-Won's whole body was riddled with wounds. However, her Status remained firm and unaffected, while her will to fight burned brightly.

He looked down at his sliced-off chest and waist, the wounds inflicted by her Steelsword.

He wasn't fighting alone; currently, both Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha were aiding him, plus he was receiving support from his Nebula, as well. Even then, he had failed to defeat a single Incarnation from another Fable chamber that entered the scenario as a mere 'Bull Demon King'.

"Stop yapping and just come at me."

Fei Hu stared into Jeong Hui-Won's blazing eyes and slowly shook his head. "The mere fact that we had to fight so bitterly against a single opponent already signifies our loss."

As if he was no longer interested in fighting her anymore, he sheathed his weapon and looked at the distant sky.

"And more importantly, the true battlefield doesn't seem to be here."

As those words came to an end, Fei Hu flung himself in the direction of the 'sacred texts', along with Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha.

Jeong Hui-Won was about to hurriedly chase after them, but then, a battleship suddenly summoned onto the river took them away at a rapid pace.

[Activation of 'Hour of Judgement' has ended.]

…That was a really close call.

If the fight continued on for a little bit longer, she would've lost for sure. As expected of Fei Hu. He wasn't a direct Incarnation of the for nothing, it seemed.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is worriedly scanning the centre of the battlefield.]

Wings of an Archangel grew on Jeong Hui-Won's shoulders. She began half-running and half-flying on the water.

“…Just what is going on here?"

Several skirmishes were unfolding all around her and she couldn't tell where she should go first.

Yi Ji-Hye, battling against 's fleet. Yu Jung-Hyeok, fighting against the 28

Mansions Constellations. Yi Gil-Yeong, dealing with the Lords of Nine Stars…

Dozens upon dozens of [Great Holes] had opened up in the sky and the Outer Gods crossing over had all transformed into Yogoes to battle the Constellations.

And in the centre of it all…

"Yu-Seung-ah!"

A young girl was reaching out towards a star.

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Shin Yu-Seung studied 's Constellations rushing at her.

[Nebula 's Twelve Star Lords are descending!]

[Nebula 's Dragon Kings of the Four Seas are descending!]

(One by one, Sun Wukong's sworn enemies were gathering.)

[It's not over yet!]

[It's fine as long as Tang Sanzang doesn't touch the 'sacred texts'!]

[Divide the army. One side shall retrieve the texts, while the others will suppress their Sanzang!]

She grabbed tightly onto the Chimera Dragon's mane, currently in its Jade Dragon form. The main attack force of was now taking aim at her.

Kim Dok-Ja, meanwhile, was still too far from her.

['s Twelve Star Lords are baring their Statuses!]

Ka-booooom!

Light exploded before her eyes.

The Chimera Dragon protected her by wrapping around her body. Choking heat penetrated into her entire figure. The second and third explosions went off one after the other and the Dragon screeched out loudly. Shin Yu-Seung gritted her teeth and leapt up by stepping on her mount's back.

[Your Sponsor's blessing is influencing you.]

[Your stunning talent has blossomed!]

[You have comprehended the 'Way of the Wind' on your own!]

She didn't know how this was possible but still, Yu-Seung ran on the river's surface.

The blessing of [Way of the Wind] was exploding out from the tips of her feet, and golden ripples spread out everywhere they landed.

「Shin Yu-Seung ran as Kim Dok-Ja had.」

This was the same method that her Sponsor used to run.

A mixture of blades and spears pounced on her from the surroundings.

Three from the left, one from right.

Two more, from below.

She evaded them all by a hair's breadth. However, the more she dodged, the more vicious the attacks became. Hundreds of sharp blades rained down like a dangerous storm. It was a spectacle akin to a monster opening its maw wide to bare hundreds of fangs at her.

And as she found herself right in front of such a monster, Shin Yu-Seung pulled out a dagger from her inner pocket.

「Shin Yu-Seung analysed the situation like Yu Jung-Hyeok.」

There was something she learned from Yu Jung-Hyeok some time ago.

[Fable, 'Conquering King's Disciple', has begun its storytelling!]

「"In the future, you shall become the 'Beast Lord'. Countless monstrous beings will cower before your feet and serve you."」

「"However, that does not mean you can become friends with every monster out there."」

During Kim Dok-Ja's three-year absence, Yu Jung-Hyeok taught her how to hunt.

Ways to face off against large monsters. Ways to hunt monsters with sturdy outer shells. And even ways to kill monsters that were hard to

fight against in close quarters.

「"If you must kill, then do not hesitate and end its life."」

「"If you don't, the one dying will be you."」

The moment she held her breath, she spotted a gap between the blades.

It was the calm eye of the raging storm.

She unleashed all of her Status and threw the dagger in that gap.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Waves of winds scattered away and the blades flying in at her fanned out away from her.

Unfortunately, she couldn't evade every single weapon; a blade's edge brushed past her small figure. Blood spluttered out from her shoulder.

「Shin Yu-Seung crouched as Yi Hyeon-Seong would.」

She crouched and, while hiding behind one of the floating debris, Yi Hyeon-Seong's face flitted in and out of her mind.

「"This is how you hide, you see? Don't forget to always memorise the location of all the covers in your vicinity, okay?"」

Ahjussi, moving his bear-like huge body and assuming a crawling position with a troubled smile on his face. And then, Jeong Hui-Won's voice, adding one more thing on top of what Yi Hyeon-Seong had said.

「"It's possible that you won't find a place to hide if there are too many enemies around."」

「"Mm, you're right."」

The powers of the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas were currently controlling the river.

Sharp spears made out of water aimed at Shin Yu-Seung's body and rushed in. Debris continued to explode one after the other, and there was no more place left to hide behind on the river's surface now.

「"When that happens, you should use your enemies, instead. Like this."」

Han Su-Yeong spoke as she grabbed and lifted the head of the crouching Yi Hyeon-Seong. Jeong Hui-Won was shooting a glare at her, while Yi Gil-Yeong was cackling away.

Shin Yu-Seung recalled all those memories and grabbed one of the Incarnations attacking her to use as a shield.

"W-what are you… Kuwaaahk?!"

「Shin Yu-Seung became as cold-hearted as Han Su-Yeong.」

She discarded the Incarnation Body riddled with grisly holes and continued to run forward.

[She's a pretty smart kid.]

[Do not let her get away!]

The distance to Kim Dok-Ja had closed up quite a bit.

"Ahjussi!"

Kim Dok-Ja's figure stopped as if he heard her call.

As she looked into his empty eyes, Shin Yu-Seung recalled what Yu Sang-Ah told her in the past.

「"I'm sorry that the world is like this."」

She could see her companions gathering around one by one.

「"I'm sorry that you got hurt like this. I'm sorry that you had to rely on powerless adults like us. Even if that's case, I'll promise you one thing. We'll always be by your side. We'll do our best so that you don't get to use these types of skills."」

Shin Yu-Seung remembered those words well.

「"To make sure that you don't forget who you are."」

Slice!

A long spear brushed past her cheek. She unconsciously touched there as blood trickled down. No one was around to help her. Neither Yu Jung-Hyeok's back that protected his companions, nor Jeong Hui-Won's sword that she could always rely on, were here.

A lengthy arm used the moment that she had lowered her guard and grabbed her collar. 's Twelve Star Lords were getting closer and closer.

[…Didn't expect her to be a real kid.]

[They let a child play such an important role?]

The Status of that defied all attempts to resist pressured her entire frame.

In any other normal circumstances, she'd never be able to fight against these enemies.

Running away was the obvious route to take, and seeking help from her comrades was the best she could do.

But, Shin Yu-Seung didn't try to run away.

[Condensed Fable has caused an abnormal event!]

She slowly blinked and opened her eyes. Her heart previously pounding away like crazy suddenly grew calm. A cold glint flickered in her eyes next.

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yu-Seung's', Attribute evolution is imminent.]

[You have found the opportunity to evolve your Attribute!]

"I'm not just a little child."

[…What did you say?]

Shin Yu-Seung grabbed the Star Lord's left arm. The powerful grip emanating from the child's hand caused the Constellation's arm to tremble.

"My name is Shin Yu-Seung."

[You have acquired a legendary Attribute.]

[You have become the 'Beast Lord'.]

"Shin Yu-Seung, from ."

A Status as white as snow ran amok on the surface of the river. As the Star Lords

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screamed and backed away, a girl wearing a white coat made an appearance before their shocked eyes.

[Beast King's Sensitivity].

It was the greatest defensive skill of the 'Beast Lord' deployed by Shin Yu-Seung from the 41st turn.

The surrounding river water overflowed and every Yogoe, as well as monsters submerged under it, leapt out at once.

Gu-ooohhhhhh!

As if they wanted to pay respect to their 'king'.

[Son of a… Where did these things come from…?!]

[Attack! Kill these beasts first!]

's Constellations began their bombardment. But a rising tide of monsters protected her.

"Chimera Dragon!"

Gu-aaaaahhh!

Affected by her Attribute, the [Chimera Dragon]'s body had grown even bigger. The creature swam in the water like an Imoogi and swallowed up the Star Lords while screeching out loudly. Constellations being torn apart by the sharp fangs cried out.

[You stinking lizard…!]

Shin Yu-Seung disregarded those Constellations and ran forward.

[OhOhOhOhOhOhOh]

[YuseungYuseungYuseungYuseungYuseung]

Yogoes created a clear path for her.

And now, the star was literally right before her nose.

"Ahjussi!"

She shouted at Kim Dok-Ja. However, he showed no signs of movement as if her voice didn't reach him.

It was then she heard the Wenny King's laughter resound out as it

battled the Great Dokkaebis. [It's too late. He now belongs to the 'Great Plotter'.]

Those words seemed to be the trigger; the heavens above powerfully shook right away.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

A [Great Hole] boasting a size so immense that others couldn't even be compared to was slowly revealing itself.

Great Yogoes on the river's surface simultaneously lowered themselves. All the fur on the white coat of the [Beast King's Sensitivity] rose up like fuzzy hair.

She could sense it without anyone telling her. The one descending right now, it was an existence far surpassing all the Constellations of the Nebula.

And Kim Dok-Ja was now that creature's possession.

"I won't allow that."

[Tang Sanzang has recited the 'Constrictive Sutra'!]

The moment Shin Yu-Seung activated the skill, the golden headband on Kim Dok-Ja's head began emitting bright light.

[Item, 'Constrictive Headband', is reacting!]

The Constrictive Headband was a treasure to control Sun Wukong.

Didn't matter whether it was an Yogoe transformation or not, every change taking place in Sun Wukong would come to a halt when the Sutra was being recited.

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[What foolishness…!]

The Wenny King's Status bore down on Shin Yu-Seung's whole body. She tasted blood in the deepest part of her mouth. The coat created through [Beast King's Sensitivity]

flapped around crazily. She staggered on her feet as she walked closer to Kim Dok-Ja.

One step closer, and yet one more step.

She saw his messed-up face, his gaunt cheeks. Her Sponsor, his eyes quietly closed.

"Ahjussi!"

[A brand new Fable is sprouting in you.]

She still had so many things to tell him.

She'd tell him about that stuff that saddened her.

And also tell him that Ahjussi looked terrible right now.

For the first time ever, she'd earnestly tell him everything.

"Please, please listen to my voice!"

She'd tell him that she wanted everyone to stop by at a PC Bang.

She'd pester him to buy her pizza and Cola and have a picnic by the Han River. And while talking about her impossible wishes in a world where many things have become impossible to enjoy…

…She'd become happy again.

Her vision quaked and tears streamed down without rest.

Finally, her hand touched the ends of Kim Dok-Ja's fingertips.

One hand covered in scars wrapped around yet another, also covered in wounds. It hurt as wounds rubbed against each other. Even then, Shin Yu-Seung didn't let go of that hand.

[Quasi Myth-grade Fable, 'Saviour of a Star', has been acquired!]

[Fable, 'Saviour of a Star', has begun its storytelling.]

"I still have too many things I haven't told you yet!"

Like, when she was studying history with Sang-Ah unni.

Or, when she was cooking the hunted game with Jung-Hyeok ahjussi.

Back when she learned how to wield a sword from Hui-Won unni.

And when she practised riding a skateboard with Ji-Hye unni.

Also, when Hyeon-Seong ahjussi lifted her up and carried her around like an aeroplane…

When she ate ice cream with Yi Gil-Yeong and read a manhwa, knowing that the follow-up volume would never be released…

"I, really…"

If only ahjussi was also in those memories.

"So many things…"

'I'm not wishing for many things' – she simply couldn't say those words.

Because, the world's Probability and this screwed-up didn't allow that.

"I just wanted to be normal…"

The stars in the sky were moving quickly.

Individual heavenly bodies sang their own Fables and looked at her.

[Many audience members are looking at you.]

Actually, she understood it already.

She knew that the ordinary happiness of an ordinary person in this world would not be able to attract any interest whatsoever.

And that was why that ordinary happiness…

…Was the greatest luxury in a ruined world.

Even then…

[Audience members are paying the cost to reveal their Modifiers.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is…]

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is…]

Even then, if someone was willing to hear her story…

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is…

As the indirect messages continued to pour in, Shin Yu-Seung held Kim Dok-Ja's hand even tighter.

It was precisely at that moment that a certain indirect message landed in her ear.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', has heard your story.]

Warmth began returning to Kim Dok-Ja's hand.

A blinding torrent of golden rays shot out from Sun Wukong's headband, and that was followed up by a raging storm of Probability's powerful sparks.

Constellations of shouted in their great astonishment.

[C-could it be?? But that doesn't make sense…!]

From several places in the sky, lightning-bolt-like rays gathered

towards Kim Dok-Ja's figure.

[Judge, 'Bimawen', has heard your story.]

(And in that moment.)

(Something that had never happened before in the history of 'Journey to the West'

finally happened.)

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', has heard your story.]

(The retired Sun Wukong has finally turned over a new leaf.)

[Judge, 'Dou-zhan-sheng-fo (Victorious Fighting Buddha)', wishes to hear your next story.]

Fin.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 3rd stage, is currently active!]

My consciousness grew dim. The first thing I heard within this pitch-black darkness was the paragraphs coming to me from beyond [The 4th Wall].

「In that moment, Yi Ji-Hye looked at the battlefield.」

Yi Ji-Hye's battlefield was there, alongside dozens of ships seemingly blanketing the whole of Tongtian River.

Incarnations of prepared to fire the cannons, while Historical Figure-grade Constellations were in charge of the command.

「"Open fire!"」

's battleships surrounding the [Turtle Dragon] commenced firing simultaneously.

Yi Ji-Hye advanced forward while brushing past the wreckages of other destroyed vessels. Some attacks she let them land her ship, while some others, she dodged.

「"Load the cannons."」

It was like watching an orchestra. Her ability to command the fleet, that had surely reached the realm of a naval god, allowed her to move the [Turtle Dragon] and the Ghost Fleet as she saw fit.

「"Fire."」

Naval Admiral Yi Ji-Hye's fleet opened fire. The Ghost Fleet had rearranged their formation according to her command and they soon repeated the accurate hit-and-run tactic, and the enemy fleet tasted destruction in the blink of an eye.

「"How can something this unbelievable be…?!"」

Her ability to overcome the difference of overwhelming numbers – this was the moment that the true worth of the 'Naval Admiral', one of the strongest Incarnations in the 'Ways of Survival', announced itself to the world.

「[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is proud of his Incarnation.]」

Yi Ji-Hye actually surpassed her Sponsor in the latter half of the original story. Maybe, I might get to see that spectacle unfold during this regression turn.

「"We're changing our tactic!"」

Perhaps they realised that things weren't going so well, as 's fleet suddenly began charging at her. An armoured battleship was taking the lead. It seemed that they had chosen to engage her in a close-quarter melee since they lost out in the long-range firefight. Unfortunately for them, though, there was something that they didn't know.

「"… Argh, I created this technique so that I could give Dok-Ja ahjussi a good one later on, but this…"」

The thing was, the Naval Admiral Yi Ji-Hye was also very handy in close-quarter battles, too.

Seeing her crouched posture getting ready to draw her sword, I could just about guess what she was thinking of doing here.

「Instant Kill (瞬殺).」

I could see that she had mastered one of the best anti-personnel combat skills in 'Ways of Survival'.

Kwa-aaaahh!

As the loud explosions burst out from the side of the ship, Yi Ji-Hye began her close-quarter combat. She cut, sliced, and then, cut some more. A sword demon's blade cut through the waves of water and reaped the head of the enemy commander.

And how much longer did she continue to cut after that? In the middle of the

Tongtian's battlefield, now dyed crimson by the spreading Fables, Yi Ji-Hye lay on her back utterly fatigued, having dealt with all of her enemies.

She stared at the darkening sky and asked softly as if she was talking to me.

「… Ahjussi. You're okay, right?」

I wanted to tell her that I was fine, but my lips didn't want to part.

[Your current level of proficiency for 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' is very high.]

[It's now possible to split the POV.]

[Character Jeong Hui-Won's viewpoint has been added to the '3rd Person POV'.]

The second person I saw was Jeong Hui-Won.

「"Get! Out! Of! My! Way!!"」

She was in the midst of chasing Fei Hu down. Yi Hyeon-Seong's blade, as she held him tightly, was busy shooting out the licks of flames belonging to [Hellfire]. Everywhere she passed by, ashes danced in the air.

I could more or less figure out what happened here. To think that 'Fei

Hu' gave up on the fight first… Maybe the strongest Incarnation in Korea was Jeong Hui-Won, after all.

[Character Jang Ha-Yeong's viewpoint has been added to the '3rd Person POV'.]

Jang Ha-Yeong, still wearing the fake beard, was running on the river, Han Myeong-Oh stuck under her arm. The end of her gaze was fixed on Yi Gil-Yeong, currently engaged in a bitter battle against the Lords of the Nine Stars.

「"Hey, kid! Step aside!"」

The Lords of the Nine Stars were a part of 's elite forces. Jang Ha-Yeong got ready to unleash the power of [Breaking the Sky Force Punch] at them.

However, Yi Gil-Yeong shook his head and shouted back.

「"Please don't interfere, Ha-Yeong-ee hyung. I'm more than enough for this!"」

He looked at the distant centre of the battlefield and gritted his teeth.

「"… I can't lose to Shin Yu-Seung."」

Yi Gil-Yeong's voice, darkness seemingly overflowing from it, was tinged with an ominous undertone. And in the following moment, a yellow-coloured storm exploded out from the boy's entire body.

No, hang on a sec. Could that be…??

Before I could come to any sort of conclusion, the scene changed.

[Character Yu Jung-Hyeok's viewpoint has been added to the '3rd Person POV'.]

Next up was Yu Jung-Hyeok, currently facing off against the 28 Mansions Constellations by himself.

「"No matter how strong he is, in the end, he's still an Incarnation from a weak little Nebula!"」

「"You think a lone bastard like yourself can deal with actual stars?"」

Even though they were acting tough, Yu Jung-Hyeok's hand was currently holding a couple of severed heads belonging to dead stars. His coat had turned into a tattered rag from the concerted attacks of the 28 Mansions, and there was a noticeable wound on his arm, but beside that, he was completely fine.

「If you're talking about 'Constellations', then I've cut down plenty of your kind already."」

Blood trickled down his forehead. His hair stained by the Constellations' Fables danced about, and like some kind of an evil monster, Yu Jung-Hyeok raised his head up.

「"And that is why all of you will fall today."」

And the screen changed for the final time.

「"Ahjussi."」

It was my own Incarnation.

「"Please, please listen to my voice!"」

Her figure trembled as if she was sobbing.

Next up, I saw my hand, held tightly in hers. That limp, powerless hand couldn't even hold hers at all. Her words cut off intermittently, and the things I need to say to her and the things I need to hear from her all disappeared in between the flitting words.

[Fable, 'Saviour of a Star', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

I… wanted to move. I wanted to wipe her tears away. I wanted to kneel down and hug her, before telling her that, her wishes were…

…Also mine, too.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut.

Memories were crumbling away.

Letters floated around the surroundings. I sensed myself scatter away inside this darkness. I heard a voice calling out to me from beyond the empty abyss.

I saw something resembling a violently-whipping [Great Hole] in the distance. Slowly, very slowly, my soul was being sucked in there.

[Ti me to ke ep yo ur pr omi se]

I was scared.

If I were to forget all of these… These emotions, where would they go to, then? And from where and to how far would [The 4th Wall] remember my story?

[Ba-aht, baaaht!]

Biyu suddenly appeared and grabbed hold of my soul being sucked out. She did everything in her power to pull back at that clump of soul.

[Ba-aaaht!]

I could only look on at her confused, flustered struggling.

I, too, didn't want to go there.

[Co me to th e si de of th e Gr ea t Pl ot ter]

That was, if only I could.

[Are you really planning to go there?]

Along with the noise of "Tsuchuchuchu!" the flow of the surrounding atmosphere changed. The letters stopped scattering away, and the suction force pulling at my soul disappeared.

Someone was using his own Status to forcibly suppress my extinguishment.

[This Master Sun is asking you.]

I looked back, and discovered a rather familiar Constellation standing there. His platinum-blonde hair gently danced in the air, and his headband was emitting a soft glow.

“…Great Sage."

Indeed, it was the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, a mischievous smile etched on his lips.

However, he wasn't alone this time.

「The re are too ma ny Sun Wu kongs here」

[Oh, so that's the 'Fragment of the Final Wall' that I heard about? What a noisy bastard.]

[Hmm… What an interesting visualised world this is.]

One was a handsome monkey kitted out in a cowboy get-up, while the other monkey had this languid expression on his face, his hand stuck under the tiger-striped thong and busy scratching away at something…

I immediately recognised who they were.

“…Are you Bimawen and Meihouwang?"

Before any reply could come to me, voices resounded out from the air above.

[Ki ng of mo nk ey s]

[Ar e yo u pl an ni ng to in te rf er e wi th us]

[Urgh, shut up. We're busy talking here.]

Meihouwang got irritated and unleashed his power, causing the ripples from the

'Outer Gods' to instantly disappear. That was truly a gob-smacking Status.

[Demon King of Salvation, we came here to ask you about something.]

The one who said that was not the Great Sage, Meihouwang, nor was it Bimawen.

Someone I had never seen before was there. He had an exotic countenance, a face oozing with this mysterious aura preventing anyone from identifying his gender.

Short, neatly-trimmed black hair, and an elegant Buddhist robe on his frame.

And judging by the fact that he was also carrying a Ruyi Jingu Bang, he too was definitely Sun Wukong. The odd thing was, though, I couldn't see the usual constrictive headband on his head.

「To Kim Dok-Ja's knowledge, there was only one 'Sun Wukong' like that in the world.」

"Douzhanshengfo (Victorious Fighting Buddha)."

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Thin sparks exploded in the air as if to react to what I said.

Douzhanshengfo asked me with an expressionless face. [I've been watching your story from the beginning.]

“…My apologies for that."

[It was a Fable with a meaning. Even out of all those numerous times when the

'Journey to the West' repeated itself, there never had been a Fable that focused itself

on the pain of the dying Yogoes.]

Meihouwang, listening to him talk on the side muttered, "Here comes the sermon-loving idiot". Completely disregarding him, Douzhangshengfo continued on.

[However, their pain is their preordained destiny. Not everyone can become protagonists, after all.]

"Why do you think so?"

[You speak as if all Yogoes are victims, but not all of them are wrongly thrust into their positions. Some among them had never worked hard once in their lives, while some carry evil intentions and choose to hurt others. Therefore, it is quite obvious that they will never become the main characters.]

"You're correct. However, just like what you've implied, some of them are not guilty of anything. No, make that quite a lot of them."

[And that is why countless Fables exist in this world. Great Fables aren't the only good Fables. Those who are nothing more than small, insignificant beings inside a Great Fable can still become the main character of a different Fable.]

He was right.

Indeed, as right as it can be. However…

“…That is only applicable when they are allowed to participate in Fables."

There were some creatures in this world that were excluded from entering even those Fables. Beings that were simply spent as expendables in various Fables while not even receiving a single percent of shares.

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[ComeComeComeComeComeCome]

"Fables should be permitted to even those who have failed."

The ones that had forgotten about themselves weren't even allowed to enjoy the opportunities of the scenarios. The gagged them, and made sure that

their words would become incomprehensible to others.

[…Is that what you truly believe?]

Douzhanshengfo asked, his unreadable eyes still locked on me. No, more correctly, he was looking at the power of Chaos rising out from my body.

[And you wish to sacrifice your whole being and become an 'Outer God'?]

“…That's correct."

The Great Sage was yawning with a bored face during my answer and once he was done, spoke his opinion. [Are you done with your confirmation? I told you, didn't I?

This guy's really like that.]

[…Indeed.]

[Seriously, man. Convincing the dear ol' Buddha-nim is the hardest thing ever.]

I had no clue what these guys were talking about.

Four Sun Wukongs glanced at me while yapping among themselves.

[Okay, so. Who's going to do it, then?]

[I shall do it. I had lost most of my memories after I was granted the Buddhahood, after all.]

[…Well, I guess you being a fakey monk can be helpful in situations like this one.]

Right in the next moment, bright light rose up all around me, causing my scattering memories to come back. And as the Probability's sparks exploded, my body glowed brightly too, as if I was being electrocuted.

[Someone is dealing with the penalty of 'Outer God Transformation' in your stead.]

…Wha?

[Demon King of Salvation, you're wrong about one thing.] said Douzhanshengfo, as he unleashed the power of Chaos. [Becoming a 'Yogoe' will not help you in understanding

them. You simply do not have the qualifications to represent them.]

He was right once more.

I couldn't possibly have known anything about the 'Outer Gods' suffering pain and agony as the Yogoes from the 'Journey to the West'. Because, I was just another actor playing Sun Wukong.

Meihouwang sniggered and remarked sarcastically. [You should know your place.]

Bimawen quickly added something else. [Your 'main topic' is not in this place.]

The last person to speak up was the Great Sage. [Leave the matters of Yogoes to other Yogoes. And you, you should live your own Fable.]

Only then did I finally figure out what was going on here.

[Great Fable, 'Journey to the West', has begun its storytelling for you.]

But, why? Why were they doing this for me?

The Great Sage smirked and replied. [Because we like your Fable. That's all.]

I thought I could hear the loud roars of the upper-rank Outer Gods coming from afar.

At the same time, I sensed the power of the Outer Gods strengthening gradually.

[HeisHeisHeisHeisHeis]

[OursOursOursOursOurs]

[My bad, but we can't give him to you.]

[NoNoNoNoNoNo]

[KingiscomingKingiscomingKingiscomingKingiscoming]

The [Great Hole] continued to churn angrily within the darkness.

Something was trying to descend to this world.

It was the king of all these 'Outer Gods'.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is glaring at the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'.]

That message brought out a bright smile on the Great Sage's face.

[Right, I wanted to have a go at you sometime, didn't I?]

Four Sun Wukongs stood all around me.

[So, who'll be the main this time?]

[Of course, it'll be me, the Great Sage.]

[And thus the dumbass Sun Wukong is born.]

[Hey, you. Don't flip your finger like that. You think this is a fusion fantasy?]

In the following moment, Sun Wukongs around me grasped each other's hands.

[Oh, ! We will be accepting the 'Demon King of Salvation' as our fifth self!]

Fin.

"Ahjussi!"

Powerful rays of light exploding out from Kim Dok-Ja's entire body, and the waves of magical energy containing 's Great Fable pouncing on Shin Yu-Seung's position, happened almost at the same time.

She reflexively embraced his body. The durability of her [Beast King's Sensitivity] had dropped to a critical level after defending against countless attacks so far. But she had no other methods to defend against this new wave other than this one.

She squeezed her eyes shut and the moment she hunkered down, a storm of blinding light exploded and the waves of Fables blanketing the surroundings disappeared as if they were washed away.

“…Ah?"

Her body, raised up to the sky, slowly descended back down again.

The spot where Kim Dok-Ja had been standing only until a moment ago was now occupied by a tall man. He was blessed with the blindingly pure platinum-blonde hair, forged steel-like muscles, and [Fiery Golden Eyes] burning in a crimson hue.

's Constellations freaked out.

[T-this can't be…!]

The Outer Gods were also shocked by the emission of the stupendous level of Status from him.

Currently possessing the bodies of the Yogoes, these Outer Gods expressed their fluster at the stunning Status of Chaos rising from this tall man.

[WhoWhoWhoWhoWho]

The man grinned brightly. [For them to not recognise me. I guess my retirement has gone on for too long.]

Shin Yu-Seung couldn't figure out what was going on here. She could definitely sense Kim Dok-Ja's aura from this man, but he was not 'him'.

In that case, just who was this man?

"Ahjussi…?"

[So, you're Sanzang?]

The Great Sage calmly looked down at her before slowly lowering himself. Soon, their gazes were locked on the same eye level.

[Kim Dok-Ja is safe.]

An unfathomable sense of lonesome longing flooded out from his [Fiery Golden Eyes].

Shin Yu-Seung unconsciously reached out. The moment her hand touched that cold golden headband on his head…

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', is continuing with its storytelling.]

Her hand trembled.

She could sense it so clearly.

Kim Dok-Ja was living and breathing within this person. Not only did he not transform into a mysterious something, but the figure of Kim Dok-Ja she was familiar with remained as was.

"Yu-Seung-ah!"

Jeong Hui-Won dashed in from the distance and hurriedly shielded Shin Yu-Seung away while shooting the Great Sage a glare. He simply grinned back at her, and shifted his gaze up to the sky.

That was where a portion of 's Constellations, Great Dokkaebis, as well as the Wenny King could be found.

[Why do you all look like that? Weren't you yapping on happily among yourselves without the protagonist of 'Journey to the West', me, present earlier?]

Indeed, he was the main protagonist of the Journey, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal.

One of the Great Dokkaebis asked him a question. [Why have you stepped forward?

Do you not have an agreement with the ?]

[I didn't break the deal. Besides, do you even have any idea what that deal is in first place, before asking me that?]

The Great Dokkaebi didn't have the chance to reply, as the Wenny King's true voice butted in first.

[Monkey King! Are you insane? The 'Demon King of Salvation' is ours. He's an Outer God now, in other words. That was our agreement!]

[He's my brother now. And also…] The Great Sage's [Fiery Golden Eyes] emitted bright light. [I'm also an 'Outer God' now, you see.]

Due to Douzhanshengfo's transformation into an Outer God, the aura of Chaos was billowing out from Sun Wukong's entire body.

[Shares of 'Outer God' in the applicable scenario currently is 35.333%.]

[Hidden Scenario – 'Verifying Agreement' has been completed!]

[Power of the Great Fable has begun moving!]

[Scenario, 「Journey to the West Remake」, is entering its final phase!]

(And then, Sun Wukong looked at his long-time comrades.) Yogoes that had fallen into confusion were all looking up at him. The majority of them were 'Outer Gods' used as expendables in the scenario. Up until only a few moments ago, they had been searching for their king, yet now, they were shaking their heads in a clear sign of fluster.

[KingisKingisKingisKingisKingis]

[WhichoneWhichoneWhichoneWhichoneWhichone]

Yogoes were at a loss, stuck between the Great Sage appearing as a brand-new 'Outer God', and the 'Secretive Plotter' they had been following originally.

He spoke to them as if he could understand their confusion. [You all suffered greatly until now, my friends.]

(These Yogoes, they had experienced this really lengthy tale together with him.)

[I know very well of the ordeals you were subjected to. I was born as a Yogoe, but got influenced by men's ways, and ended up accepting their ideals and customs. I carried out what they deemed to be true righteousness, and walked on their path of Dao.]

(Sometimes, they were his enemies. At other times, they were his allies.)

[And the result of that, is this. Yogoes were sacrificed. And the meaningless epiphany repeated itself. Now, 「Journey to the West」 has become a tool to strengthen the Nebula's influence by spreading around the tired, obvious truths.]

(However, all of that was nothing more than a Fable, a play performed on a stage.)

[I'm sure it'll be impossible to atone for the past. Even then, if you are willing to forgive me…]

(The ancient king of the Yogoes. Their king, who used to fight against the heavenly worlds once upon a time, was now speaking to them.)

[Then I shall fight for you from now on.]

One by one, Yogoes raised their heads.

[ReallyReallyReallyReallyReally]

The Great Sage replied to them. [I shall put my true name on the line and swear to you.]

Yogoes began moving towards him. One and two soon became ten, grew to a hundred, and before long, went past a thousand. Yogoes hiding under the river's water, ones hiding within the clouds in the sky, they all revealed themselves. They gathered like

swarms and began forming a horde. As if they were trying to worship the king they had served a long time ago.

[Ancient 'Great Fable' is waking up.]

[Halt! Cease what you're doing!]

[You're a judge! A judge cannot interfere with a Fable in progre…!]

Great Dokkaebis urgently stepped forward to stop this situation, but it was useless, at least this time around.

[has acknowledged the Probability of the 95th Main Scenario.]

[Main theme of the「Journey to the West Remake」is changing drastically!]

Even the Great Dokkaebis couldn't go against the gigantic flow of the .

As for the Wenny King, it stepped back without resistance as if it wished to observe the unfolding situation first.

Its original aim was to send 'Outer Gods' into a scenario anyway, so technically, that goal had pretty much already been accomplished. The only problem was…

…Who was the one leading all these 'Outer Gods'?

Ku-gugugugu!

Thunderbolts crashed down from the [Great Hole] in the sky, and soon, something broke past the abyss to make their descent.

[H-he is…!]

Status emitted by him was so powerful that the Outer Gods appearing so far couldn't even compare to him. The Great Sage, the Wenny King, even the Great Dokkaebis –

they all witnessed that person's incarnation into the world.

The Great Sage smirked. [So, he finally showed up.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', has incarnated into the scenario's location!]

[Someone has joined the scenario in the role of 'Demon King of Confusion'!]

The 'Secretive Plotter', currently in the form of a jet-black lump of shadow wavering around in the wind, took on the role of a Yogoe to participate in the scenario. Perhaps due to him not going through a proper entry procedure, blindingly bright sparks were enveloping his entire body.

The Great Sage asked him. [Are you here to hinder this great Master Sun?]

[[That depends on your choice.]]

[As expected, you have a rather insidious-sounding voice, 'Secretive Plotter'.]

This would be the first time that these two came face-to-face. A confrontation was brewing between two Constellations who had been

watching Kim Dok-Ja for a long time through Bihyung's, and later, Biyu's channel.

The Great Sage growled and spoke up. [You pretended to be all slick and sophisticated in your indirect messages, but today, you finally reveal your true colours.]

The 'Secretive Plotter' quietly studied the Great Sage. [[Meanwhile, you are just as thoughtless as your indirect messages suggest.]]

Sun Wukong emitted a stupendous amount of Status and roared out triumphantly while gripping his Ruyi Jingu Bang. [Enough talk. Since you're here, let's fight. This situation won't get resolved unless I kick your ass first, anyway.]

The Plotter's entrance caused agitation and unrest to spread among the surrounding Yogoes. It seemed as if they were hesitating on who to follow among these two absolute beings.

Submit to the king of all Yogoes, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal?

If not, submit to the king of Outer Gods, the 'Secretive Plotter'?

The possibility of a sudden confrontation between two Constellations brought about a palpable sense of tension to the Great Dokkaebis, Wenny King, and to other Constellations floating in the air.

On one side, an Outer God who dreamed of the 's destruction, while the

other, the strongest Constellation within itself.

A battlefield that had never been created before was about to commence.

Sun Wukong, burning with the will to fight, was about to raise his Ruyi Bang high up into the sky, but then…

[[I'm sorry, but your opponent today isn't going to be me.]]

Accompanying those words, the heavens split open wide and a great amount of sparks exploded out.

[Nebula, 's, Constellations are descending to the scenario!]

The number flooding in was in another realm altogether compared to 's forces that had entered so far. Half-destroyed stars of the 28 Mansions, the few remaining Lords of the Nine Stars, Dragon Kings of the Four Seas, and after that, a countless number of immortals and wargods from the Taoist pantheon were incarnating into the scenario.

[Constellation, 'Master of the Immortal Peach Garden', is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Constellation, 'Heaven's Wise Man', is incarnating into the scenario!]

[A great number of Constellations hiding their Modifiers are incarnating into the scenario!]

That wasn't all. Spirits that ruled the plains, the mountains, and the rivers, and even the great cosmic army that guarded the heavenly palaces – an army consisting of over 100 thousand in total blanketed the scenario's sky.

[The Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li Jing, Prince Nezha, and Erlang Shen. Now that is a nostalgic combination. And not only that, the heavenly palace's lazy-arsed geezers are here too…]

(The enemies from the heavenly palace he used to fight against a long time ago were now standing before him.)

[Great Sage, what's the meaning of this?]

Prince Nezha, the very one who tried to suppress Jeong Hui-Won along with Fei Hu earlier, was now brimming full with the power of a

Fable incomparably mightier than before. That was because he was no longer playing a role from the Fable chamber, but making an appearance as himself.

[What do you mean, what? I'm here to end this scenario.]

The Great Sage's curt reply prompted an immediate opposition from 's Constellations to rise up.

[You can't arbitrarily decide on the conclusion like this!]

[Don't you realise that the「Journey to the West」will end up in the hands of a weakling Nebula if you do this?!]

[Hurry and give up on the 'sacred texts'!]

The Great Sage looked at the 'sacred texts' held in his hand, and then, took a glance at Shin Yu-Seung next to him. Then, a smirk formed on his lips.

[Argh, it's fine if it ends up with them. What's the problem? I mean, it's good that its fame is spreading out even further, am I wrong?]

[This is against our agreement!]

[Nope, it isn't. Us helping you out was until 'The four Sun Wukongs choose the same Fable', wasn't it? And that day has arrived, that's all.]

Having realised what the Great Sage was thinking of, the 's Constellations began exchanging glances with each other.

[Nebula, , is greatly enraged at the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'!]

Erlang Shen stepped forward to represent his Nebula. [Great Sage. Do you understand what your actions mean? Could you be possibly planning to start the 'Great War against the Heavenly Worlds' in this place?]

[Hmm? No, I didn't think of that, but well, if you wish to fight, then…]

Ku-gugugu!!

The incredible aura flooding out from the Great Sage's Incarnation Body forced Constellations of to falter and retreat. His Fable that swept across the heavenly worlds in the past was being unshackled in this scenario.

However, Erlang Shen's voice remained composed. [I acknowledge your strength. No one from can even dream of besting you in one on one combat. However, you can't win in this fight. Because, the Fable will simply repeat itself.]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut…!

Signs of「Stage Transformation」could be spied now. Fables collided, and the event from a long time ago was about to be recreated once more.

A great war between the king of Yogoes, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, and .

The Great Sage spoke up. [For sure, I did lose back then. However, that was when I was just the 'Great Sage, Heaven's Equal'.]

The sensed something was off and made their move first.

[He's about to use his magic! Subdue him, now!]

[Lord Daode Tianzun! Your Jingangzhuo…!]

[Come, Six Brothers from the Mae Mountain!]

The Great Sage summoned his Somersault Cloud while watching the army of the heavenly worlds pounce on him. Dark clouds dyeing the sky black heeded Sun Wukong's Fable and began gathering into one place.

[Great Fable, 'Journey to the West', has begun its storytelling!]

And then, he opened his mouth. [My true name is Sun Wukong.]

「The Great Sage Heaven's Equal.」

「Meihouwang.」

「Bimawen.」

「Douzhanshengfo.」

And, finally…

「The Demon King of Salvation.」

A storm began raging on top of the Tongtian River. Thunder and lightning crashed down. And in the centre of this storm, the Great Sage was slowly clenching his fists.

*

As the blinding lightning bolts pounded down on the battlefield, Yu Jung-Hyeok finally arrived at his destination.

The godly figure of the Great Sage bringing down numerous Constellations in the middle of the Tongtian was truly something to behold.

'…Kim Dok-Ja is inside that guy, huh.'

Thanks to his golden-coloured [Eye of Sage], Yu Jung-Hyeok got to quickly confirm Kim Dok-Ja's current situation. It seemed that the fool was still alive. And for some strange reason, that powerful 'Great Sage' personally incarnated to grant the man his own powers.

Jeong Hui-Won and Shin Yu-Seung could be seen some distance away. They were basically hiding among the great battles taking place between the Yogoes and the Constellations, which was a wise decision on their part, really.

As for Yi Gil-Yeong, Yi Ji-Hye, or even Jan Ha-Yeong, it seemed that they hadn't arrived in this location as of yet.

'We need to finish this scenario soon.'

Their Fable chamber had already reached the top of the rankings, and the 'sacred texts' were in the hands of Shin Yu-Seung, currently playing the role of Tang Sanzang.

[The 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」 Fable chamber is currently holding the 'sacred texts'.]

[Guarding the 'sacred texts' for one hour will automatically conclude the scenario.]

[54 minutes remaining until the conclusion of the scenario.]

Even the final phase of the scenario had been activated, as well. Just by holding on, the Great Fable of the 'Journey to the West' would be 's.

However, there was one thing that concerned him. And that would be…

Ku-gugugu…

It was that 'person' currently spectating on the battlefield from the middle of the sky.

The 'Secretive Plotter.'

He was simply watching on at the fight between the Great Sage and

without getting involved. Yu Jung-Hyeok could guess what he was planning here. He was probably planning to wait until the Great Sage ran out of strength and launch a sneak attack on his opponent afterwards.

However, the incarnated Plotter's aura wasn't the same as before.

- He seems to have wasted a lot of Probability. He indeed has far too much riding on this regression turn.

Those words were spoken by Yu Jung-Hyeok [999]. From some time ago, this damn dumpling was making himself home on the full-sized Yu Jung-Hyeok's shoulder.

He glanced at [999] with disinterested eyes before silently unsheathing the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

"Meaning, this is my chance to kill him."

That was when the Secretive Plotter accurately locked eyes with him. Just from meeting that being's gaze caused Yu Jung-Hyeok to freeze up on the spot.

[Fable, 'One who Opposes Miracles', is shrinking away.]

[Fable, 'One who Hunted the King of Disasters', is refusing to fight.]

His Fables were shivering in fear. So, becoming weak meant falling into such a state?

The memories of defeat brushing past him now ruled over him.

Perhaps, the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] wasn't the only thing that broke on that day.

[999] addressed him again.

- Looks like you're afraid.

Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't want to acknowledge it, but it was the truth.

- Indeed, the current you will never defeat the 'Great Plotter'.

It was the 'despair' that couldn't be overcome no matter which history he was willing to bet away. Yu Jung-Hyeok stared at that

overwhelming wall of time. That wasn't something mere 'effort' could overcome.

- However, it's not as if there are no other avenues left for you.

"What?"

[999] leapt off from Yu Jung-Hyeok's shoulder, and his outer appearance began transforming. A Murim dumpling was changing to that of Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[999]'s height grew back up in an instant, and regained the exact same appearance as Yu Jung-Hyeok's.

The distinctive Status of a Transcender oozed out from the back of another him currently facing away. Yu Jung-Hyeok became keenly aware of who this was in this moment.

Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 999th turn.

As his black coat danced in the air, [999] addressed his counterpart. "Remember.

Remember who you really are. Remember what you wished to achieve by coming this far."

[999] then slowly pulled out a sword from his inner pocket. Surprisingly, it was not the [Heaven Shaking Sword].

No, it was the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], the exact same weapon that the 3rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok possessed.

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[999] spoke up once more.

"Let me show you the battle from the 999th turn."

Fin.

Anyone would've read about Sun Wukong's story at least once in their lives. In my case, the first thing I'd recall after hearing his name would be his description as written in the 'Ways of Survival'.

「Ruyi Jingu Bang that destroys the heavens.」

「Body Outside Body spell that allows him to fight against a Nebula all by himself.」

「Thunderclouds capable of bringing down stars of the world.」

One of the strongest Constellations in the 'Ways of Survival', that was the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, Sun Wukong.

[Great Fable, 'Journey to the West', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

And right now, I had become that very Sun Wukong.

Kugugugugu!

Every time the Great Sage's fist pointed at a spot in the sky, the stars of fell in droves. I ended up holding my breath after witnessing that

overwhelming power from a first-person perspective.

I already knew that he was powerful, but never did I guess that it'd be by this much.

'Hey, maknae-yah. What are you busy yapping on about?'

I heard Meihouwang's voice in my head.

It seemed that including myself, all five versions of Sun Wukong were watching the Great Sage's rampage in real-time as well.

'Are you shocked by your hyung-nims' power level?'

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'…To be honest, I'm really impressed.'

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

[Kuwaaahk!]

A giant that got sent flying away just now was a Fable-grade Constellation.

Come on now, how could blowing away a Fable-grade with a single lightning bolt even make sense?

Meihouwang spoke as if to mock our opponents. 'Hng, was that the Giant God? That measly little Fable-grade made a mistake by trying to fight us.'

'But, wasn't the Prisoner of the Golden Headband' a Fable-grade as well…?'

The one who answered back this time was Bimawen. 'If we were on our own, sure. But you now understand what kind of an existence we are, don't you?'

He was right. This was really hitting home for me.

The main protagonist of the 'Journey to the West', Sun Wukong, was created by four different Sun Wukongs.

The king of all monkeys that ruled the Water Curtain Cave, 'Meihouwang'.

Acknowledged by the Jade Emperor for his magical prowess and awarded the post of

'Bimawen'.

The 'Great Sage Heaven's Equal', who fought against the heavenly worlds that looked down on him.

And finally… 'Douzhanshengfo' who gained enlightenment through the events of the

'Journey to the West'.

Only after the Fables of these 'Sun Wukongs' gather in one place would his true power be unleashed.

Bimawen muttered out. 'That Great Sage dude, he's really having fun, isn't he? Well, I guess it's been a long time since he got to cut loose like this.'

Indeed, the Great Sage's true voice sounded as if he was really enjoying himself. [The heavenly worlds have become a lot weaker, haven't you! Is this all you've got?]

Fable-grade Constellations couldn't even endure ten-or-so exchanges of blows and all came crashing down into the Tongtian River's waters.

[Attack him!!]

Despite that, 's forces still remained powerful. After all, it was the Nebula that boasted the highest number of stars in the .

The thing was, though, the Great Sage's Fable was only getting started, too.

[OhOhOhOhOhOhOh!]

Outer Gods roared out all at the same time, and a lightning bolt landed on Sun Wukong's Ruyi Bang. Ripples of golden light exploded then, and he powerfully threw his weapon into the sky.

Kwa-aaaaah!

Ruyi Bang's torpedo-like attack burned the heavens and flew forward with ferocious momentum. Incredible gusts of gale winds whipped around.

Finally, the dispersing spray of water died down. One of the Constellations, soaked to the bone like a mouse that fell inside a well, muttered out in disbelief.

[W-what is the meaning of…?!]

A portion of the skies was now empty.

That single attack managed to annihilate thousands of divine immortals rushing in.

[T-this, is this the real Great Sage, Heaven's Equal…]

Even then, even when facing this overwhelming spectacle, 's spirit didn't diminish one bit.

[There's no need to fear! His Fable is bound to hit its limit soon!]

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[Do not let up and attack! He's all alone in the end!]

The number of divine immortals swelled back up again and refilled the empty void in an instant.

This was how fought.

I got goosebumps. No matter how strong our side was, that side had no end to their supply. At this rate, the one to lose would be…

'Hng, no need to cower already. That fool hasn't used his power yet, after all.'

'That fool?'

'I meant Douzhanshengfo.'

Ah, Douzhanshengfo, the Victorious Fighting Buddha. He was the one who dealt with the Outer God transformation penalty earlier in my stead.

'Is he alright?'

'The fourth is fine. He's enlightened in the ways of the Four Noble Truths (苦集滅道), so the memories of the material world are meaningless to him. Everything would return to 'nothingness', that's why.'

Bimawen quickly tackled Meihouwang down. 'Since when did Douzhanshengfo become the fourth?'

'Since he was the fourth one to make the appearance, that's why. Isn't it normal to count chronologically?'

'With that thought process, then… '

'Obviously, I am the first since Sun Wukong started off with me. And congratulations, even though you're the least famous one, you get to be the second.'

'Acting exactly like a dumbass monkey that you are, busy spitting in your own face. You think anyone would actually remember a king of monkeys stuck in a cave?'

'Well, it's a lot better than you fool who had to clean horse shit out of a stable.'

Was it because of the two Sun Wukongs' bickering? The construction of the Great Sage's Fable became unstable for a moment there, and he ended up getting struck abruptly by an enemy attack.

As the main body began shaking, the Great Sage finally exploded in irritation. [Shut the hell up! I can't concentrate!]

Of course, he didn't forget to add one more thing triumphantly, as well. [I'm the most famous one, so obviously I'm the first!]

Meihouwang and Bimawen exploded in a fit of dissatisfaction at the same time.

For the first time since the battle commenced, the Great Sage had to be on the defensive against the incoming vast wave of the stars.

If he got pushed back here, then he'd not be able to win this war. Maybe both Meihouwang and Bimawen understood that point as well, as they stopped bickering and concentrated, as well.

Boom!! Bang!! Ka-boom!!

It was at that moment that a corner of the battlefield collapsed and a huge battleship made its entrance.

"Ahjussi! I'm here-!!"

It was Yi Ji-Hye, advancing forward while destroying 's vessels. The members of had made their move in order to support Sun Wukong fighting alone. That wasn't all, though.

[Constellation, 'Golden-bodied Arhat', is incarnating into the scenario!]

The Great Sage's real comrades began entering the scenario one by one. The Golden-bodied Arhat, Sha Wujing, appeared in the sky in his Incarnation Body and smiled contently as he looked at Yi Ji-Hye down below.

[So, you are the one who played me?]

“…Who the heck is that monster??"

[Constellation, 'Cleanser of Altars', is incarnating into the scenario!]

The next one to appear was the owner of the Nine-tooth Spike Rake. Zhu Bajie kitted out in a piece of loincloth so flimsy and small that it might not as well be there flapping below his jiggling belly fat, shouted out loudly. [Where are you, the Conquering King Pigsy, Yu Jung-Hyeok? Hahaha! I was thoroughly impressed by you, the one who played me!]

It seemed that the 'Cleanser of Altars' was fixated on Yu Jung-Hyeok at this point.

The Great Sage looked at both Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing, and nodded his head. [You came, fellow disciples. A bit late, weren't you.]

[I didn't really come to help you out, senior brother. No, I was just curious about the actor playing me, so don't be mistaken.]

Zhu Bajie muttered out some excuses that sounded oddly coy for some reason, and along with Sha Wujing who looked somewhat shocked and hurt, stood next to Sun Wukong.

When the Demon-Slaying Staff and the Nine-tooth Spike Rake unleashed their Statuses right next to the Ruyi Bang, it finally dawned on me that all of the 'three musketeers' from the 'Journey to the West' had gathered in one place.

[Great Fable, 'Journey to the West', is regaining its original Status!]

Soon, the nervous Constellations of loudly yelled out.

[Judges! Are you saying that you'll be siding with the Great Sage?]

[It's not just them.]

Six more humanoids were standing tall behind the three Journey to the West's main characters. One of them resembled a monkey, while others resembled a shark, a lion, and even a roc.

I immediately recognised who they were.

The Great Sage Who Covers the Seas, Saurian Demon King.

The Great Sage Who Brings Chaos to the Heavens, Roc Demon King.

The Great Sage Who Moves Mountains, Lion Spirit King.

The Great Sage Who Pierces Through the Winds, Macaque Spirit King.

The Great Sage Who Chased Away the Immortals, Snub-nosed Monkey Spirit King.

The last person wasn't a Yogoe, but Jeong Hui-Won.

“…This just got rather interesting."

Thanks to the blessing from the 'Great Sage who Pacifies Heaven' Bull Demon King, the Status of the actress playing that role, Jeong Hui-Won, was rising up at a break-neck pace.

[We will fight alongside you, Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.]

The Seven Great Sages that waged the 'Great War against the Heavenly Worlds'

alongside Sun Wukong had finally gathered in one place once more.

These Yogoes didn't get much page-time during the original「Journey to the West」

and as a result, their presence had always remained behind the veil of obscurity. They appeared today to undo the knot of resentment in their hearts.

[I always felt wronged because my nickname also happens to be 'Meihouwang'. Today, I shall resolve my deep-seated grudge!]

After the Seven Great Sages jumped into the fray, the flow of the battlefield changed greatly in an instant.

Those Outer Gods hesitantly studying the Plotter's moods until then joined the battle as well.

Meihouwang (Handsome Monkey King) watching the battle unfold muttered to himself. 'Where did that Conquering King Pigsy disappear to, anyway?'

Now that I took a look, I couldn't see Yu Jung-Hyeok anywhere.

He should've been battling the 28 Mansions Constellations just now, so…

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Suddenly, I had this ominous foreboding.

I looked up at the Wenny King and the Great Dokkaebis watching the climax of this scenario from high up in the sky.

[Advance! Do not retreat and continue fighting! The victory shall be 's in the end!]

's Constellations roared out energetically and continued to push forward.

The ones taking the lead up front were the Heavenly Palace's Four Heavenly Kings.

Dhrtarastra of the East.

Virudhaka of the South.

Virupaksa of the West.

Vaisravana of the North.

Not only that, there were the Pagoda-bearing Heavenly King Li Jing as

well as Prince Nezha. It seemed that they were getting desperate as well.

And then, even the Queen Mother of the West, and the owner of the Jingangzhuo, Daode Tianzun, too… Constellations that you might recognise by their names alone had descended to this place and unleashed their Fables.

There was little doubt that the 'Great War against the Heavenly Worlds' was being recreated right now.

[Nebula, , is releasing its Great Fables!]

This was the might of a 'Great Nebula'.

Even then, the Great Sage didn't back off.

[Many in the audience can't close their slack jaws while watching this abrupt spectacle.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', declares that if the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' loses today, they will no longer be considered rivals.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is cheering on the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'!]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is expressing his respect towards the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband's' martial prowess.]

The first one to kneel was Dhrtarastra, followed by Virudhaka. Everywhere the Ruyi Bang flew past, the Heavenly Worlds army crumbled.

The divine level of martial arts, the might of the greatest Constellation, Sun Wukong was in full display.

But then, a Buddhist chant coming from somewhere caused the Great Sage to come to a stop for the first time.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

Even I ended up gasping out in pain.

It seemed that I wasn't the only one suffering here. Both Meihouwang and Bimawen spoke in annoyed voices.

'Goddammit…!'

'…It's that baldy monk.'

The constrictive headband was tightening around the Great Sage's head. He massaged his temples with one hand while issuing a warning. [Guanyin. Do not interfere!]

Those words prompted a Buddhist lotus pedestal to appear among the clouds.

Guanyin was sitting in the middle of the pedestal in the lotus sitting position.

[Wukong, have you forgotten about what happened in the past?]

[What are you talking about!?]

[Please stop this. This is not the righteous path.]

[What if I don't want to?]

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[Have you not received my aid until this moment? Can you not concede in consideration of that, at least?]

[…Your aid?] The Great Sage's brows shot up higher. [All thanks to your oh-so-wonderful aid, I got to enjoy untold hardship.]

As if he was venting out all of his built-up resentment, the Great Sage began shouting out loudly. [All those trials and tribulations we had to go through came to be because of your voyeuristic tendencies…!]

The Great Sage's memories related to Guanyin, the one who perceived the sounds of the world, began telling their tale.

「"The law stipulates that one has to fulfil all nine by nine, eighty-one tribulations in order to return to their 'self'. However, they have only experienced the eightieth calamity, and thus lacks one. Five Gates, I now task you to go after them and create the final calamity!"」

The 'Journey to the West' final calamity – the one behind it was none other than Guanyin.

[The ones responsible for the world's calamity by raising up the army of demons and inciting the Yogoes, were you and !!]

[…They were all necessary tribulations. You must cool your ire now.]

As the Great Sage grew even more agitated, Guanyin began reciting the Constrictive Sutra once more.

[You think you can stop me with such a pathetic sutra?]

Pah-chuchuchut!!

The Status emitted by the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal disrupted the Constrictive Sutra's effect.

Guanyin was taken greatly aback by this development and while retreating along with her lotus pedestal, she raised her voice.

[…Your powers have grown too strong. I alone can't handle him.]

The Pagoda-bearing Heavenly King bit his lower lip. [We'd be able to win if we drag out the fight, but…]

Less than 30 minutes remained until the conclusion of the scenario. They knew that, even if they emerged victorious through a protracted battle, there would be no meaning if they were defeated in the scenario.

[Sakyamuni! Where is Sakyamuni?!]

In the end, had to make the obvious choice as their final move.

[We only need the「Five Pillars」! As long as we have that Fable, defeating that damn monkey bastard will not pose any problems!]

The「Five Pillars」referred to the Buddha's five fingers.

Even if it was the heaven-defying Sun Wukong, as long as there existed the Fable of him being subdued by the Buddha's palm, he'd not be able to escape from the「Stage Transformation」's influence.

And one of the split bodies of the Buddha, Sakyamuni, existed in this world.

Prince Nezha whispered to the Pagoda-bearing Heavenly King next to him.

[Have you forgotten? Sakyamuni's whereabouts are unknown since the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. Most likely… I fear that he had perished during the process of sealing away the Isle of Reincarnators.]

[Sakyamuni has died? Doesn't that mean, there is no method to suppress him…?!]

[Please, do not worry. We do have his successor with us.]

At the end of those words, the army of split open.

[Come, 'Sakyamuni's Successor'!]

The highest-ranked Constellations of were walking out from the space created by the army. Each and every one of them were powerful beings that rivalled the likes of 's 12 Gods.

But when I saw the person wearing the airy Buddhist robe walking in the middle of them, I quietly grew agitated.

「Yu Sang-Ah was there.」

Yu Sang-Ah, reincarnating through the promise with Sakyamuni. And by the eternal chain of Samsara, she was reborn as the 'Sakyamuni's Successor'.

'… Great Sage?'

The Great Sage's body had stiffened up immediately. I could sense a great deal of emotional turmoil within him.

I also heard Meihouwang's and Bimawen's voices just then.

'So, that was why, when he saw her for the first time… '

'Who'd have thunk that it was 'that' Incarnation Body?'

At that moment, a certain part of the Great Sage's memories rushed in. That lengthy storyline of the 'Journey to the West' was abridged in an instant.

And I realised it then. Yu Sang-Ah hadn't simply reincarnated as the 'Sakyamuni's Successor'. No, her current Incarnation Body used to belong to someone very special.

「"Oh, dear Sanzang."」

Tang Sanzang (三藏法師).

The one whose mastery of the Constrictive Sutra had surpassed everyone else's in the whole world, and also the only one capable of coercing Sun Wukong with just one sentence.

's Constellations loudly shouted out.

[Hurry and suppress that bastard, oh 'Sakyamuni's Successor'!]

Even as he saw Yu Sang-Ah walk towards him, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal showed no sign of budging – as if he had fallen deeply into the reminiscence of the ancient past.

'Great Sage! Get a move on! What are you doing?!'

'We're going to get done in at this rate!'

Hearing those words made me a bit anxious as well.

Was the 'Yu Sang-Ah' before my eyes the 'Yu Sang-Ah' that I used to know? What if she lost her memories, like how the reincarnated Shin Yu-Seung lost hers?

What if she became a completely different person to whom I used to know?

Yu Sang-Ah's hand gently reached out and touched Sun Wukong's headband.

[You seem to be in great pain. It must've been difficult for you.]

But the moment I heard her clear voice, I realised something.

This person… was definitely someone that I knew.

She was neither 'Tang Sanzang' nor 'Sakyamuni's Successor'. No, she was the one comrade that I could trust the most – Yu Sang-Ah.

[I believe that this item will look better on someone else now.]

Her hand slowly moved and took Sun Wukong's Constrictive Headband off.

The headband that had been tightening around the Great Sage's head fell to the ground with absolutely no resistance whatsoever.

Meihouwang, Bimawen, and even the Great Sage – all of them stared at her in pure disbelief.

's Constellations freaked out grandly and tried to rush in, but by then, it was all too late.

As the roars from the Constellations rained down, the prisoner of the oldest prison was finally being freed.

[Awakening condition for the Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has been satisfied.]

[Douzhanshengfo's Fable is being unsealed.]

[Modifier for the Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is evolving!]

As the glorious rays of light exploded forth, the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'

slowly opened his eyes.

[Constellation, 'The Most Ancient Liberator', has been freed from his seal.]

Fin.

After he was freed from the seal, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal became more like a Yaksha.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is greatly astonished.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is dazedly watching the battlefield.]

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Borders of the Oceans', is opening his eyes wide.]

[Constellation, 'Great Mother God Who Created Man out of Earth', can't tear her eyes away.]

This power that, never mind the highest-ranked Fable-grade Constellations, even the Myth-grade Constellations had no choice but to pay attention to.

Sun Wukong's clones multiplied through the Body Outside Body spell to number in the hundreds, nay, into thousands, and began dealing with the Nebula's great army.

Thunderbolts shooting out from their fists obliterated a group of Historical Figure-grade Constellations in one go, and a dozen or so Fable-grade stars crashed to the ground below after getting struck by the Ruyi Bang.

The entirety of the Tongtian River couldn't handle his power and began crying out.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

This was the might of Sun Wukong, the one who had completed the conclusion of the grand epic, the 'Journey to the West'.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Sparks exploded non-stop on our body. We were inside the 'Journey to the West', the location of his Fable no less, yet the was still suppressing his powers.

The disjointed Probability was returning in full to the Sun Wukongs as well as myself,

and thanks to that, I thought I might lose my mind here.

[Excessive distortion in the Probability is eroding your consciousness away!]

'Looks like maknae is finding it hard to handle.'

'Let him leave.'

[Four Sun Wukongs have agreed to separate the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

My body grew out of the main one like a sprout and began crashing down to the earth below.

I wretched uncontrollably and by the time I regained my wits, I found myself sagging on top of a piece of floating debris on the Tongtian River.

I could see Sun Wukong that I used to be a part of only a moment ago busy engaging the 's Constellations in a bitter warfare up in the sky.

"Ahjussi!"

A voice came to me from somewhere. And soon enough, two humanoids crashed into me. One fairly large, and one fairly small.

[Ba-aht! Baaaaaht!]

I raised my upper body with great difficulty and saw Shin Yu-Seung and Biyu clinging onto me.

While crying her eyes out, the former was hugging my arm dirtied by the blood and flesh of various Yogoes. I wiped my hands caked in blood on my coat and carefully hugged her.

Even though [The 4th Wall] existed, the incoming rush of emotions couldn't be restrained.

I was back.

I had managed to come back again.

"Dok-Ja-ssi."

I raised my head to find Yu Sang-Ah in her white robe standing nearby.

She had reincarnated into the Incarnation Body of Tang Sanzang. Even though her body was now different, her appearance was the same Yu Sang-Ah that I remembered.

I smiled weakly at her. "You came back."

"I've seen all the things you've done while I was away, Dok-Ja-ssi."

My shoulders flinched just a bit before I knew it. I wondered if she'd scold me, but to my relief, she simply smiled benevolently.

"It must've been hard for you."

Before I could say something in reply, though, she continued on.

"However, please stay that way for a little while longer."

Ng?

Just as I was about to open my mouth, Yu Sang-Ah gently reached out and placed something on my head.

[You have become the owner of the 'Constrictive Headband'.]

[Due to the effect of the 'Constrictive Headband', a new Modifier has been generated.]

[You have become the 'Prisoner of the Constrictive Headband'!]

My jaw went slack from this unbelievable event.

"Hmm, so, what should I do with you now?"

Seeing Yu Sang-Ah pressing her finger to my forehead and wagging it around a bit, I was overcome with this slight sense of terror. I was well acquainted with the pain from the headband already.

I quickly opened my mouth. "I-I know that I made a few mistakes. I do. However… Can,

can I tell you in detail about them a little later? Right now…"

"Right now, that side should take priority, I know."

I nodded my head.

We looked up at the sky where the [Great Hole] was still whirling around. And in the middle of the hole, at the two Yu Jung-Hyeoks currently locked in a bitter battle.

*

Yu Jung-Hyeok [999] wielding the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] dashed into the air while scattering the Status of a Transcender.

At the end of his travel awaited the king of all Yu Jung-Hyeoks.

[[So, this is what you chose in the end.]]

The oldest Yu Jung-Hyeok in the universe.

He was Yu Jung-Hyeok who broke past the 1863rd regression turn and witnessed his own Conclusion.

[999] stared at that 'Secretive Plotter' and recalled his own ancient memories.

'■■'.

The end that came around to all living creatures just once.

[999] also experienced his own version of the end. Although what he saw was different from the Plotter's Conclusion, he at least glimpsed his end just a little.

The 999th regression turn was quite different from the others.

The majority of people would never understand what it meant for a single person to live a thousand lives. However, [999] did just that, and he knew that he'd get to live just as many lives in the future. And that was why, he…

「"… At least for this turn, I shall live for all of you."」

He sacrificed himself for his companions during the 999th turn.

「"Captain, just forget about me! I'm telling you, leave me behind and go!!"」

During the 38th scenario, he lost his left arm trying to rescue Yi Ji-Hye.

「"Jung-Hyeok-ssi! No!! Jung-Hyeok-ssi!!"」

During the 55th scenario, he lost his right leg for Yi Hyeong-Seong's sake.

「"But, but why did you, for someone like me…”」

And during the 74th scenario, he sacrificed both of his eyes to awaken Shin Yu-Seung.

「"It's because all of you also did that for me. That is all."」

Whether this was him trying to atone for his past lives, or an odd,

unlikely whim resulting from the thousandth stab at life, he couldn't tell.

Except that, Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 999th regression turn earnestly lived his life like that. For the first time ever, he gave up on the idea of wanting to see the 'Conclusion'.

What he wished for instead, was…

「"I wish for all of you to see the end of this world."」

Didn't matter even if he didn't make it, he just wanted one person at the very least to see the end of this .

Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 999th turn sacrificed his memories and soul for that purpose.

He didn't hesitate to form the 'Other World Pledge' if that allowed his companions to grow stronger.

And at the end of the road where he sacrificed his everything…

「"Captain, we're almost at the Final Scenario."」

A small miracle happened.

「"Just a little bit more, a bit more and we're there! Jung-Hyeok-ssi!!"」

He couldn't even walk with his own power anymore. He no longer possessed hands to swing a sword, he didn't have eyes to look at the world anymore, and couldn't use any of his skills after his bloodstreams all went haywire.

But as the reward for his sacrifice, his companions managed to get near the Final Scenario.

「"Please wake up! Please. Please!!"」

In the end, though, he didn't get to see the conclusion to all the scenarios. The 'Other World Pledge' had taken away his life on the verge of the Final Scenario, that was why.

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared at such [999] and spoke up. [[Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 999th regression turn. I respect the life you led. Excluding me, you were the only one who managed to get near the 'Conclusion'.]]

[999] quietly pointed with the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

From the body of the 'Secretive Plotter', shouts directed at [999] coming from other Yu Jung-Hyeoks flooded out.

- Are you being serious?

- Do you really wish to fight the Great Plotter?

- You need to wake up, [999]!

[[However, you are a part of me. No matter how much history you drag out and use it against me, you'll still never defeat me.]]

"If you are really me, then you should know that you can't persuade me."

[[The life you experienced only amounts to half of mine. Besides, your memories aren't even perfect. Yet, you wish to fight me regardless?]]

[999] didn't reply and simply built up his momentum.

Perhaps he read something from such a [999], the Plotter's attitude suddenly changed.

[[If this is what you truly want.]]

Jet-black smoke rose up and began creating the outer skin of the 'Secretive Plotter'. A certain man's outer appearance slowly materialised within the smoke.

The loneliest king in this universe, the white coat-wearing Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn now stood there.

[[I too no longer have the need to carry on with this pointless charade.]]

At the end of those words, the 'Secretive Plotter' discarded the coat he was wearing.

The white coat flew away with the wind and landed on the surface of Tongtian.

Pitch-black darkness seemed to wrap around his shoulders, and before long, a black coat was now covering him. It was the same coat that stayed with him through to the 1863rd turn.

The [Heaven Shaking Sword] in his hands began emitting ominous aura.

And at the same time, the figures of two Yu Jung-Hyeoks vanished in the air.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwakwa!!

Countless friction noises arising from two swords clashing alerted others to the unfolding fierce battle. The vicious collision of two Statuses caused sparks to explode endlessly and dyed the sky pure blue.

This sudden eruption of the violent clash prompted the eyes of the audience, focused on the Great Sage's struggles until then, to shift away.

That also included Yu Jung-Hyeok, standing on the surface of Tongtian and looking up at the ferocious battle between the 999th turn and the 1863rd turn.

His clenched fists trembled as his muscles tightened. Both of them would prove to be a difficult opponent for the current him. If he continued to diligently acquire more

'lives', then he might have reached that lofty height.

Yu Jung-Hyeok kept his eyes wide open and fixed his gaze. As if he wanted to absorb everything about [999] and the 'Secretive Plotter', he read their Fables over and over again.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

The Fable depicting the truly unfathomable hellish landscape – the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'

who had walked half of that hellish nightmare, and another 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' who had actually witnessed the end of that hell, were clashing against each other.

Two [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship]'s drew long arcs in the air like shooting stars.

One was from the [Heaven Shaking Sword], while the other was the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. Two swords burned brightly like a pair of supernovas.

[[Now that I look back, you didn't use Heaven Shaking Sword as your main weapon, did you?]]

During the 999th turn, Yi Ji-Hye inherited his [Heaven Shaking Sword].

The 'Secretive Plotter' used the [Breaking the Sky Meteor Strike] (破天流星決), piercing through [999]'s entire body.

[[You will never win against me with such poor sword technique.]]

“…I'm sure that's the case. However."

[999] became riddled with wounds in the blink of an eye, yet he didn't back off and held the sword even tighter.

For a moment there, the Plotter's eyes quaked.

[999] had disappeared for a blink, but then, he materialised right before the stunned Outer God's eyes. This was not the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship].

It was 'Instant Kill'.

"At least, I can show you the history that I lived through."

It was Yi Ji-Hye's technique.

[[Something like this…!]]

The [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] was deflected away in the nick of time, but it now smoothly drew the arc belonging to [Kendo] next.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

The eyes of [999] now flickered with the lights of [Demon Slaying].

The life Yi Ji-Hye lived during the 999th turn was now unfolding from [999]'s hands.

The kick as sturdy as Yi Hyeon-Seong's. The Claw Technique as ferocious as Yi Seol-Hwa's. Shin Yu-Seung's natural perceptiveness, and even Kim Nam-Wun's excellent battle sense, too.

Histories that [999] experienced through his body, began telling their stories now.

In this very moment, [999] wasn't alone.

Techniques from the comrades he had saved were being recreated through his flesh.

[Kendo] broke past the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship], and the combination of

[Blackening] and [Demon Slaying] dug into the open gaps of [Red

Phoenix Shunpo].

And so, as Yi Seol-Hwa's [Thousand Spirits Poison] took aim at the Plotter's heart…

[[With these measly trivial techniques…!]]

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

[999]'s Fable began crumbling away. Yi Hyeon-Seong's defences crumbled and Yi Seol-Hwa's claws broke. Kim Nam-Wun and Yi Ji-Hye both fell, while Shin Yu-Seung went down on her knees. The [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] flew out of his hands after he failed to withstand the impact, and the weapon fell to the surface of the Tongtian River.

Just like always, [999] was left alone.

[[999, you have failed.]]

Confronted by the unfathomable life lived by one individual, the lives of his comrades all crumbled away.

[999] nodded his head, yet he did not despair. "… In another universe, it might be different."

[999]'s gaze was redirected to the Tongtian's battlefield, something that the Great Sage and had created. Events of this universe that had never happened before.

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[[… Even you have been fooled by the baseless hope in this place, it seems.]]

"You speak as if it's someone else's business, Great Plotter." [999] staggered unsteadily, yet he continued to speak. "We have failed. We failed to save a single one of our companions, and witnessed the end

by ourselves. Was that really the end we wanted to see?"

[[That is futile sentimentality.]]

"This universe is different."

[[No, this universe shouldn't even exist from the beginning.]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke coldly as his figure moved.

[[This universe was created by the end result interfering with the cause. This universe hastens the collapse of Probability with its mere existence. Indeed, this place shouldn't even be allowed to exist, as it's simply a practical joke by the 'Most Ancient Dream'…]]

"Great Plotter, you already understand this, don't you? Within that closed-off universe of the oh-so-great 'original storyline', it was impossible to see the story we wanted to.

And that was why you…"

For the first time there, the 'Secretive Plotter' faltered slightly. But that lasted only for a moment.

He lightly wielded the [Heaven Shaking Sword] which pierced into [999]'s body.

[[Return to me, [999]. I need you back.]]

The stabbing [Heaven Shaking Sword] began sucking out [999]'s memories. Their ego that had been split apart was now being reclaimed.

[999]'s blurring vision shifted down to the Tongtian's surface below. The 'Secretive Plotter' already knew who was down there and spoke in a mocking tone. [[He has already tasted defeat at my hands. Do you honestly believe that someone who can't even remember anything is capable of stopping me?]]

"Yu Jung-Hyeok, take hold of the sword!"

A sorrowful voice reverberated throughout the Tongtian. And at the place where that voice reached stood Yu Jung-Hyeok, who was neither [999] nor the Secretive Plotter.

He was looking up with a confused expression but then, looked back down to the two items resting on top of the debris floating on the river.

[999]'s Dark Heavenly Demon Sword, and then… the white coat the 'Secretive Plotter'

had discarded.

「"I wish to live."」

「"If I have a chance, just like the world that I saw…"」

Pain assaulted him in his head. Unknown memories brushed past his mind.

[Your Fables are getting agitated.]

"You need to remember who you really are!"

As if he was under a spell, Yu Jung-Hyeok grasped the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

It felt so natural in his hand, as if it had been his since a long time ago. And he picked the coat up from the debris as well. It was white, the colour he disliked.

- You are not the 3rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok.

That day, [999] told him that.

- Haven't you ever wondered why something felt off? Even if Kim Dok-Ja was here, does you of the mere '3rd turn' developing this fast make sense to you?

As he fell deeper into this familiar sense of deja vu, he slowly put the white coat on. It fit him like a glove, as if he had worn it before.

- Do not try to bullshit me. I'm 3rd turn. I…

It'd be a lie if he had never thought about it at least once before.

Was he really the '3rd turn' Yu Jung-Hyeok?

-… And even if I'm not the '3rd turn', all I can remember are the memories of up to the

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3rd turn, anyway.

Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly raised his head and looked up at the sky.

The slowly-vanishing [999] was looking back at him.

- Don't you have comrades now?

The face that he had not seen once, even with a mirror.

- Comrades, that remember your life far better than yourself?

The Plotter's [Heaven Shaking Sword] moved. The jet-black Status capable of rending even the universe itself took aim at him, and in that moment, Yu Jung-Hyeok recalled someone.

And then…

[The 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 3rd stage has activated!]

As if a Sponsor had descended, the power of a familiar star incarnated into him.

「Let's go.」

And the story began.

Fin.

"Dok-Ja ahjussi?"

I hesitated while watching the distant battle between two Yu Jung-Hyeoks.

[Your Incarnation Body's condition is currently unstable!]

I'd not be any help whatsoever if I joined the fight in my current condition. And when I took a closer look, the ones fighting were [999] and the 'Secretive Plotter'. I wasn't sure why, but [999] must've decided to side with us.

I clenched my fists tightly.

「Kim Dok-Ja made a decision. There was only one method remaining.」

The [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint].

Just like back then against Nirvana, or during the fight against Poseidon…

- Maknae-yah, what are you hesitating for?

The Great Sage Heaven's Equal spoke to me. Even though he was in the middle of a huge battle in the sky, he still sensed my emotions.

I muttered in a voice that could barely be heard. "… I've gotten a little

afraid of reading them."

It was probably after fighting against Yu Jung-Hyeok back in the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

And more recently, right after I heard what [999] had to say.

「"Do you still believe that you can understand someone through just a few lines of text in a couple of chapters?"」

Up until now, I had been a 'reader' of the stories. However, for how long would it be

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okay for me to remain as one?

- Right, you possess the power to read another person.

He had accurately guessed my ability. He stuck around my channel for a long time as the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', so it wouldn't have been that difficult to figure that much out.

- There was a time when I too, wanted to know more about someone.

I sensed the Great Sage's gaze landing on Yu Sang-Ah. Or more correctly, not her exactly but her current 'Incarnation Body'. He was staring at the body's 'former owner'.

- I still haven't fully understood why Sanzang chased me out twice.

During the original 'Journey to the West', Sun Wukong was expelled from the party twice.

- However, I never asked Sanzang about it properly. Maybe it was because of my worthless pride. I was stuck in a loop, thinking and wondering only to myself. Why did that idiot do that? What was the reason for those decisions? What was the point of such obstinacy? What did I do wrong, and where did a problem come from? Even after

our journey was over, those questions kept bubbling inside my head.

This would be my first time hearing such a story.

Even to someone like the Great Sage, there were unresolved questions reserved only for him.

- And by the time I finally found the courage to ask, my opportunity had slipped away already.

The faintest trace of dejection could be felt from his voice.

Since I didn't know much about the story after the conclusion of the 'Journey to the West', I had no way of estimating the depths of his sadness.

One thing that I could be sure of, though, was the fact that the real 'Sanzang' was no longer with us in this world, as Yu Sang-Ah had reincarnated into the Incarnation Body

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in question.

- And to find out the answers to those questions, we kept repeating this 「Journey to the West Remake」, hoping that maybe, someone else would tell us the story that I didn't know before, something that I had not read before.

Only then did I realise why the Great Sage participated in this scenario event. I felt curious just then. Did he finally find his answer?

- I couldn't find it. However… I did find a small solace.

The Great Sage's gaze was now fixed on Shin Yu-Seung. As the 's attacks rained down, he continued to speak.

- And about that solace, let me tell you all about it.

[Great Fable, 'Journey to the West', is continuing with its storytelling.]

- I'd probably never get to understand certain things. I'd never even get close, and maybe, everything I did might be in vain. However, even if we know it's impossible, we still have to read the Fable. That is what it means to exist as 'Constellations', as the stars of the heavens.

The Great Sage failed to understand Sanzang. And quite likely, he'd never get to understand even into the future.

Even then, he didn't give up.

- That's why you should read it.

'However, I alone can't… '

- Why do you think you're alone?

I reflexively raised my head after hearing his words.

- Maybe not like you, but people always are reading each other. So, you should not stop reading, either.

In a way, this advice wasn't really on point.

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However, I still ended up feeling a certain something. It was as if small feathers had piled up. I began thinking that maybe this was the solace the Great Sage felt while watching our story.

"Yu Sang-Ah-ssi."

I called out to her, and she looked at me as if she was waiting. "Will you be alright?"

"Yes. By the way, if it's possible, be gentle…"

Yu Sang-Ah nodded her head and chanted the Constrictive Sutra in my direction.

My body slumped to the floor as if a fuse had gone out. My consciousness managed to slip out and quickly flew towards where I needed to go.

['Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 3rd stage is activating!]

[Your degree of understanding of the applicable individual is very high!]

[The '1st Person Protagonist's POV' is activating!]

My vision slowly stabilised and at the same time, powerful strength overflowed within my body. It was Yu Jung-Hyeok's strength.

A short while later, the enemy's figure could be seen before us. An existence enveloped in the aura of immense Status and arrogantly glancing at us.

The 'Secretive Plotter'.

The Great Sage was right. That guy could never be defeated alone.

「Let's go.」

The Transcender's Status violently raged within my body. I added every ounce of my own Status to Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[Transcender's Status has encountered the Demon King's Status!]

The powers that I earned so far interweaved with that of Yu Jung-Hyeok's and began boiling up. Vigorous energy circulated within the blood vessels as if they had a

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complete overhaul.

Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly opened his eyes gleaming in golden light and spoke back to me.

'You're late.'

He didn't get angry or reprimanded me, simply choosing to say that.

He probably knew that I was playing the role of Sun Wukong, though…

「I'm sorry.」

'Talk about unimportant matters later. Defeating this bastard takes our utmost priority.'

Kwa-aaaaah!!

The Plotter's [Heaven Shaking Sword] lightly danced, and the Tongtian River was split in half. With nary a hair's breadth, we managed to evade the attack. Constellations and Incarnations coincidentally within the range were swept away and became nothing more than fading screams. That was truly a nonsensical attack power.

[[You're struggling in vain. Even if you managed to regain your memories, you still can't defeat me. Because you too also began from me.]]

「What is he on about now?」

Yu Jung-Hyeok running on the river's surface replied in annoyance. 'According to him, I'm not Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 3rd turn.'

「Really? Then, what?」

I reflexively asked him, but to be honest, several dizzying theories were floating around in my brain already. Perhaps this was the question that had been building up from a long time ago.

「'The 3rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok shouldn't have known about such information, though?'」

Back during the [Green Zone] scenario.

「'… No matter what, his rate of growth is just too fast.'」

…And even back in the [Cinema Dungeon], too.

All the questions I secretly had every time I checked Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Character List]

began rising up one after the other. Even the conversation I had with [999] entered my head.

「"Yu Jung-Hyeok in this world-line said that he was the 'third turn'. So, this place is the third regression turn."」

「"Trusting such information at its face value. How naï ve."」

By the time I came around, I was already initiating the [Character List].

[Applicable individual's information is far too numerous. 'Character List' will change to 'Summarised List'.]

[For the convenience of the user, only the selected items will be displayed.]

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Individual: Yu Jung-Hyeok

Exclusive Attribute: Regressor ＜3rd turn＞ (Myth), Ruler of Amusement (Legendary)…

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It said 3rd turn. He was definitely from the 3rd turn.

In that case, just what on earth were those guys talking about…?

「Kim Dok Ja re ally ca n't t ell?」

Pages of my memories began flipping. Memories that I tried so hard not to recall.

「"That 'world' you've shown me, does it really exist?"」

「[The applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]」

'Wake up, Kim Dok-Ja!'

I abruptly regained my wits after hearing Yu Jung-Hyeok's shout. Now wasn't the time to think about something else.

The Plotter's Status as he floated up in the air was strengthening gradually.

[[It seems that you still haven't really regained your memories.]]

“…I won't lose so easily this time."

As if to oppose that rising Status, Yu Jung-Hyeok raised his own power level. The movement technique, [Red Phoenix Shunpo], and the power of the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] were pushed to their absolute limits. The [Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword] completely covered the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

He fought in the same manner the last time. And still lost.

However, those weren't the only things accompanying him this time.

[5th Bookmark has been initiated!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Lightning Transformation Lv.23 (+13)', has been initiated.]

[Exclusive skill, 'Way of the Wind Lv.18 (+8)', is activating!]

['Demon King Transformation' is activating!]

Effects of the [Way of the Wind] were added to Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Red Phoenix Shunpo], while the electrical energy from the [Lightning Transformation] permeated into the

[Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword]. And finally, the power of 'Demon King' was added to the power of 'Transcender'.

Double the power, triple, quadruple… Yu Jung-Hyeok's Status multiplied in an instant and threateningly spread over the Tongtian's surface.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

As the sparks danced in the air, we dashed towards the 'Secretive Plotter'. The

[Lightning Transformation] and the [Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword] permeated in the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. The greatest technique belonging to both Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint emitted blinding light simultaneously, causing a truly incredible storm of sword aura to gush out.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

This was the power capable of cleanly splitting mountains in half and vaporising the ocean itself.

Unfortunately, the 'Secretive Plotter' remained unperturbed even when facing such power. Two swords then clashed, emitting screeching friction noise. As I was sharing the sensation with Yu Jung-Hyeok, I felt the full brunt of the pain akin to my hands being torn to pieces.

We were attacking with both hands, while he used only one. Even then…

[[How pitiful, Yu Jung-Hyeok.]]

…We failed to cut the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Tsu-chut, tsu-chuchuchut.

Sparks exploding around him indicated that he wasn't even going all out. How could there be such a large gap between our fighting power if that was the case?

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

The surroundings were morphing into his stage. The hell of regression that reached 1863 turns. 'Outer Gods' moaning in pain inside burning craters and countless corpses of the stars strewn about.

[[The price for escaping the closed universe and dreaming of a new story is for you to not even remember who you are. Is that the world you've been truly wishing for?]]

That evil demon-like voice came from beyond the hellish landscape.

I was confused. It was as if I could almost get what he was saying, but at the same time, I couldn't readily accept it.

Yu Jung-Hyeok that escaped from a closed universe and dreamed of a new story. I knew of only one 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' that fit that criteria.

And if that was true, then…

Then, if the Yu Jung-Hyeok I knew was that 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'…

['The 4th Wall' is getting even thicker.]

'Kim Dok-Ja, we won't win unless you use that powerful skill.' Yu Jung-Hyeok suddenly yelled out. 'Utilise the Fable from the last time.'

I knew what he meant by 'last time'.

The 「Hellscape of Eternity」, the Fable that I used while fighting against Poseidon in the past.

Back then, we killed Theseus by borrowing the memories of the 362nd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok. I looked at the Fable of darkness flowing around the 'Secretive Plotter' and could only sigh in doubt.

「Honestly, I'm not sure whether we can win or not even after using

that.」

The regression turn I used all my being to read back then was only 362nd. Things would've improved somewhat by now compared to then, but still, I couldn't even guess whether that'd be enough to defeat the guy before our eyes or not.

「And also… 」

That wasn't the only thing making me hesitant here.

If I succeeded in borrowing the strength of Yu Jung-Hyeok from higher turn than 362nd, then this Yu Jung-Hyeok would lose his memories alongside me.

Just like how Constellations and Incarnations read Fables, I too read Yu Jung-Hyeok's

'Ways of Survival'.

If I used the 「Hellscape of Eternity」 here, then Yu Jung-Hyeok would have to experience the 'reading' stained by my misunderstandings along with me.

The 'Ways of Survival' I read in order to survive. History that I 'remembered' as I pleased.

I had one-sidedly twisted or exaggerated the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' in that 'history'. My version was questionable at best, an idealistic depiction of the reality.

「… Dammit.」

Even then, I had no choice but to do this unfair thing.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

While stuck inside the feeling of powerlessness, I flipped the pages. Whether it was before or after the apocalypse, it was the same story – all I could do at any given moment was to flip through the pages of a book.

Countless regression turns of Yu Jung-Hyeok went past my eyes.

3rd turn, 4th, 5th… 41st… 182nd…

Memories continued to flow by.

Many Yu Jung-Hyeoks were now staring back at us.

362nd turn… 598th… 724th…

[Your 'Comprehension' is advancing towards a new possibility!]

[Pages you couldn't read before are now available!]

862th… 999th…

Blood welled inside my throat. Pain pummelled my head as if to shatter it into pieces.

[999]. The regression turn that I really liked.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's dialogues gradually decreased in the number. This was my limit.

[You have reached the highest turn you can read.]

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[The highest turn 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' you can read is '999th'.]

The message popped up like the final score tied to the book report. But I couldn't lift up my head. How could reading something be this shameful and feel so wrong?

It was in exact moment that Yu Jung-Hyeok opened his mouth.

'Doesn't matter how you read it, the one to judge it will be me. So, you simply concentrate on reading.'

He deflected yet another one of the Secretive Plotter's attacks even though his body was riddled with wounds. He spoke again. 'It's my freedom to decide what I hear and what I remember. And I shall decide who I am.'

With a voice I knew so well, he was talking about a story that I didn't know.

'You fool, you are not reading it alone.'

The moment I heard him, something woke up inside me.

It wasn't the memories related to the 'Ways of Survival'. No, it was of the conversation I had with my mother a long time ago.

「"Why are we rereading the story we know already?"」

There were stories that didn't change even if you read it again. It'd not change, because the one reading didn't change.

My mother replied to that question in this manner.

「"Shall we read it together, then?"」

Reading it together.

[Your 'Comprehension' is rapidly being enhanced!]

As my head became even more of a mess, the pages that I couldn't flip with my powers alone began flipping over.

1146th… 1398th… 1561th… 1733th…

The people I met in this world were flipping the pages together with me. I still failed

to understand some things, but I got to figure out a few others just then.

And there were some paragraphs that I'd seemingly never understand.

[[…!!]]

I thought I heard the 'Secretive Plotter' shout something.

My consciousness continued to waver. Like a man fighting the drowsiness, I continued to flip the pages again and again – while vomiting blood, while enduring against the merciless barrage of sparks.

I still didn't know much about Yu Jung-Hyeok.

「"You can only return to that world after I die, correct?"」

「"If you remain here, you won't be able to save that world."」

However, what if my misunderstanding built up over the period of ten-plus years could help me reach just a tiny sliver of understanding like some kind of miracle?

「"I've become curious about that world's ■■."」

Then, I'd be able to read it again.

[The highest turn 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' you can read is '1863rd'.]

The Plotter's Status flying in touched the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and scattered away.

I dazedly blinked my eyes. As if the overwritten letters were being peeled off, the

[Character List] began changing. The number '3' was peeled off, and new numbers were being engraved there, instead.

And on top of this empty piece of blinding white paper, a page I had never read before began unfolding.

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Individual: Yu Jung-Hyeok

Exclusive Attribute: Regressor ＜1864th turn＞ (Myth)

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It was a completely new story.

Fin.

The 1864th turn.

We were not in the 3rd turn, but in the 1864th world-line.

The moment I saw that attribute window, waves of realisations that I could barely digest right now crashed into me.

「… This 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is the one that disappeared during the 1863rd turn?!」

「How can that even be possible?」

「But, didn't that Yu Jung-Hyeok escape from being a [Character]?」

「Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn escaped from being a [Character] because the 3rd turn exists. But if that's true, then how could he be the 3rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok from the get-go…?」

Numerous questions brushed past my head, and the last thing to pop up was the final conversation I had with tls123.

「I was thinking of sending you a special gift as a way to express my gratitude, Dok-Ja-nim.」

That 'gift' the author was talking about, could it be…

Kwa-kwakwakwa!!

The Fable's power overflowed; the surrounding view of the hellish landscape began changing. The world was wailing in sorrow, and Outer Gods fallen into lamentation cried on.

And on that stage of despair, a thin and thread-like, but clear, ray of light existed. It was

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the sword light belonging to the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

[[Have you regained your memories, then?]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' asked, but Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't reply. I knew why he didn't, of course – the explosive amount of memories were making an utter mess inside his head, that was why.

My reading wasn't perfect.

No matter how diligently I read it, and even though Yu Jung-Hyeok worked together with me, it was physically impossible to completely

restore the '1863rd Yu Jung-Hyeok'.

As he staggered about, fragmented memories continued to enter his head.

「"Eat dirt, Yu Jung-Hyeok."」

「"Happy memories! Happy memories!"」

「"Yu Jung-Hyeok, sit."」

"You son of a…"

「This isn't the time to think about that, you idiot!」

I hurriedly awakened Yu Jung-Hyeok. Because, the [Heaven Shaking Sword] carrying the Status of a Hellscape was slashing towards his nose right at that moment.

Along with "CLANG!!" two swords clashed loudly once more.

The attack still felt considerably heavy. However, it wasn't as intolerable as before.

[[… I wanted to fight you.]]

For the first time ever, the light of emotions began spreading within the Plotter's eyes that used to remain calm no matter what happened. The 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' who survived the 'original story' I read, and who saw its finale – the 'Secretive Plotter' was now talking to us.

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[[You bastard, you disappeared to the 'beyond' without a word.]]

I had no idea what he was talking about. It seemed that Yu Jung-Hyeok, too, had no idea. The stuff I read in great haste was imperfect, and because of that, there were lots of holes in Yu Jung-Hyeok's memories.

He then angrily spat out. "Looks like I'll have to teach you how not to speak in riddles."

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The Fables we shared were shoved into the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]

simultaneously. The ensuing attack clashed against the [Heaven Shaking Sword]. And the moment two Hellscapes collided, a whole universe opened up between the blades.

It was basically a Big Bang of memories.

[Two remarkably similar beings are colliding.]

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

The moment I saw the view of the universe, I instantly realised which phenomenon was about to unfold here.

It was none other than the [Disconnected Film Theory].

A similar event also occurred back when the two Shin Yu-Seungs from the two different world-lines met.

「[[… This is a new world-line?]]」

These memories were brought up to the surface after two definitely-similar Yu Jung-Hyeoks walking on completely opposing paths collided.

「[[It's not possible for this kind of a world-line to exist.]]」

These were the Plotter's memories. Memories of the very day that he had discovered

this particular '3rd turn'.

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[[Interesting. Is this really the 3rd turn…?]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' couldn't tear his eyes away from the 3rd turn's story playing out before his eyes. Someone he didn't recognise was advancing the story along with himself from the 3rd turn. He couldn't understand how such a thing could even be possible.

[[However, you'll still fail.]]

They used some methods he recognised, while he hadn't even thought of some others before. Sometimes, they looked to be reckless, and in some other times, they got real lucky. This was a Fable he had never seen before. The 'Secretive Plotter' watched the Fable of this world-line as if he was sucked right into it.

And so, how long had he been watching this Fable?

He finally realised that he had become exactly the same as the Constellations that he loathed so much.

All the 'Yu Jung-Hyeoks' he had absorbed were talking to him.

- Have you forgotten, the Great Plotter?

- We wish for 'death'.

- That regression turn will not succeed, anyway.

Death. That was the ardent wish of all Yu Jung-Hyeoks cursed with the fate of regression. The 'Secretive Plotter' existed solely for the sake of fulfilling that mission.

- It's impossible to kill the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

- As long as we are alive, we must regress again.

- Even if dying is impossible, what would it be like to get infinitely close to it?

The reason for sending Han Su-Yeong's Avatar to the 1863rd turn was precisely because of that. By using the irregular discovered in this 3rd turn, they'd complete their 'death'.

He was planning to seal away every Yu Jung-Hyeok via the [Disconnected Film Theory]

– to merge with the 1863rd Yu Jung-Hyeok and fall into an everlasting slumber.

But on the verge of that plan's completion, he had a sudden change of heart.

「"I'm simply heading towards the 'Final Chapter(終章)'."」

It was because of one certain Constellation that searched for his own ■■.

The Final Chapter. The name of ■■ that he dearly wished for, but never received.

[41st turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is shocked.]

[416th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is shocked.]

[967th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is shocked.]

[1472nd turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is shocked.]

…

Yu Jung-Hyeoks from all the regression turns inside him also witnessed that spectacle.

Some Yu Jung-Hyeoks marvelled, some despaired. And some Yu Jung-Hyeoks grew furious.

The 'Secretive Plotter' belonged to the last category.

[[… It's not possible for another Final Chapter to exist.]]

His world had already come to an end. He had reached his 'Conclusion' by going through trials and errors of the 1863rd regression turn. He had lost everything, and he witnessed the end of all scenarios. And he reached that Wall.

He hadn't been wrong – and he wanted validation for it.

[[Let's say that you reached the end and saved the world through your methods. If so, what are you going to do about the 'other worlds'?]]

[[What will happen to other worlds that you didn't save?]]

And so, the 'Secretive Plotter' sent Kim Dok-Ja to the 1863rd turn.

He made the fool witness the end of the story.

To tell him, "This is the true 'original story'."

To tell him, "This is the end of the world I have decided on, and nothing can change that fact no matter what."

「"I'll end your story for you."」

However, Kim Dok-Ja, he…

「"I won't be returning to the 3rd turn. I'll remain here and witness the end with the people of this place."」

…He changed that.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchut!!

The Yu Jung-Hyeok sealing plan failed, and the direction of the story that should've been set in stone was diverted.

[1863rd turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is refusing to cooperate with you.]

「"I wish to live."」

Yu Jung-Hyeok who should've been sealed away, chose 'regression' instead, and entered a brand new world.

The 'Secretive Plotter' hurriedly collected the memories of all the 'dead' Yu Jung-Hyeoks and chased after him. He chased after the Yu Jung-Hyeok wearing the white coat, crossing the blinding starlights of the world-lines while his memories scattered

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away.

This Yu Jung-Hyeok had cast off the mask of [Character] and flew towards the brand new world.

[[Stop!! You cannot head to the next part!]]

Only the 'Secretive Plotter' knew of this world's conclusion.

The 1863rd turn was the 'end of all stories'. And after it was…

「I wish to witness that 'world'.」

[[Return to me. The place you're supposed to be, is here! You…!]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' roared out. Even if the 'Most Ancient Dream' permitted this regression, in the end Yu Jung-Hyeok was bound to repeat the nightmare again. And not to forget, him starting the scenarios without his memories would mean…

「That fool definitely said it. He said that universe definitely exists.」

['Most Ancient Dream' is growing curious of that story.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok was reaching out. He was now picturing it, a world located so far away.

A world that didn't exist within the universe of the 'Ways of Survival'.

The 'Secretive Plotter' managed to catch up to Yu Jung-Hyeok's soul form in the nick of time. But what he grabbed onto was simply the white coat. Yu Jung-Hyeok's body had already disappeared by then.

The 'Secretive Plotter' muttered out hollowly. [[You fool…]]

The 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' who lost his memories succeeded in regressing.

This would be another futile story where the beginning and the end were already set in stone. The everlasting nightmare was about to repeat itself again in that place.

The 'Secretive Plotter' began searching for this world-line.

He wanted to learn more about the world-line that the oh-so-amazing idiot disappeared

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into even at the cost of his memories. The Plotter thought that he'd feel better about himself after witnessing that fool living out the scenarios in wretched, broken misery and regret.

Eventually, he discovered the world-line in question. Shockingly enough, he knew about this world-line already.

[[… This can't be possible.]]

But only then, everything seemed to click into place.

The reason why a world-line he didn't recognise suddenly appeared.

The reason why a completely different world-line existed where the 3rd turn should've been.

Every regression he experienced was used as a sacrifice to create this 'world-line above the Wall'.

['Most Ancient Dream' is dreaming the 'Final Dream'.]

This was the impossible world-line created by the end result interfering with the cause.

His universe was shaking now.

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As the explosion resounded out, Yu Jung-Hyeok's and the Plotter's figures separated.

We fixed our grip on the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and glared at the enemy before us.

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke. [[… Now you know. This universe shouldn't even exist.]]

Finally, I could understand what this guy was talking about. And also, I could understand just a little how this world-line came to be, and why these events had

occurred.

The 'beyond' that Yu Jung-Hyeok from 1863rd turn chose during his regression – that was the regression turn we were experiencing right now.

[[What a cruel thing this is. You just about managed to escape from being the puppet of the nightmare, yet you became the puppet once

more.]]

His tone of voice was heavy with grief. I couldn't even fathom the depths of resentment contained within his words.

[[If you read the same book hundreds of times, you might come up with a different interpretation. However, the texts will not change. Because those are the events that had already ended, and can't be turned back to the beginning.]]

The Plotter's [Heaven Shaking Sword] was drawing a long trajectory in the sky. It contained the weight of the 1863rd turn.

The one who used to be Yu Jung-Hyeok once upon a time, but now lived on as the

'Secretive Plotter'. The one who dreamed of the death of all the 'Yu Jung-Hyeoks' in the world.

He spoke up once more. [[The only reason why all of you managed to survive was because I exist.]]

And that existence was wielding his history like a weapon.

[[All of you, you should've died in that subway. Or back in that Cinema Dungeon. You should've died at Nirvana's hands, and should've perished in the Dark Castle.]]

He was right.

[[You should've died in the Demon World. You should've died during the

'Gigantomachia', and you should've all died tens, no, hundreds of times already during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', and during the 'Journey to the West'.]]

If his life didn't exist, if his failures didn't exist…

…Then none of us would have survived until now.

[[So, how did you all manage to survive??]]

And now, he was asking us.

[[Why, why is it not me, but you??]]

Fin.

I recalled that time when I visited the 1863rd turn.

When I first saw the 1863rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok, I thought that he was the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok from the original'. The main character that I spent my childhood years with, the very one that propped up my life.

But then, he was not him.

The 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' who helped me endure, had finished his tale a long time ago. He had reached the conclusion of the 1863rd turn and witnessed the end of the world, and then, roamed the horrifying abyss of the world-lines. For thousands of years, maybe even for tens of thousands.

I didn't know just how long he lived on like that. But, what I knew for sure was that one, he had survived until now, two, he remembered all of those times, and…

…And, he was being hostile towards me.

[[You all do not possess the right to witness the ■■.]]

He was right.

The only reason why I managed to wade past the scenarios was due to the Plotter's life preceding mine.

His Status was growing even stronger. The 'Outer Gods' observing the situation in the vicinity all knelt down simultaneously.

[OhOhOhOhOh…]

His aura mushrooming up like clouds wrapped around the [Heaven Shaking Sword].

That was the power he gained after living through 1863 lives, and also, while roaming the world-lines afterwards.

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[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling.]

Countless 'Yu Jung-Hyeoks' were looking straight at me from inside him.

['Yu Jung-Hyeok' from 41st turn is looking at you.]

['Yu Jung-Hyeok' from 362nd turn is looking at you.]

['Yu Jung-Hyeok' from 666th turn is looking at you.]

['Yu Jung-Hyeok' from 999th turn is looking at you.]

The histories they had compiled together – all their sins, they were right there. Sins so numerous that not even Jopiel's [Eye of Sin] could see the end of.

He was an existence deemed to be 'Terror' by this . A being that went beyond the boundaries of 'evil' and had been declared as 'incomprehensible' by the world. He was the king of the Outer Gods.

However, his true nature was neither evil nor was it terror.

No, the reason why he had to be ostracised by the was because his character proved to be simply too uncompromising.

「"I shall destroy the ."」

And the thing was, the didn't like such characters that lacked any flexibility whatsoever.

One's character had to bend sometimes, had to know when to yield, and also, had to know when to crumble away. However, the 'Secretive Plotter' wasn't a character like that.

That's why he was able to get this far, and was able to become the 'Secretive Plotter'.

「"I shall definitely kill the one that started this story with these hands."」

That was the 'apocalypse' of this world, the one he wished for. And also, the 'end of regression' that all Yu Jung-Hyeoks wished for, as well.

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[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

He was definitely in the right.

He definitely… was far more qualified than anyone to witness the

conclusion of all the stories. Especially so, when compared to someone like me, whose only achievement was reading the 'Ways of Survival'…

'Stop with your unnecessary thoughts. And don't stupidly sympathise with him, either,' said Yu Jung-Hyeok. 'Are you planning to yield to some random bastard after you came this far? Was the Fable you managed to compile so far created solely by copying that bastard's life?'

I couldn't reply.

'If you sympathise with what he says, then it's the same thing as denying the lives of your comrades who fought alongside you.'

For sure, I did rely on the 'Ways of Survival' in the beginning to skirt past the dangers, but things were different after that. Events that didn't happen during the original novel occurred, and dangers not found within it also came to visit us. And I managed to overcome those dangers with my comrades.

As our Fable continued to grow, so did my distance from the 'Ways of Survival', and from a certain moment on, I stopped consulting the original. That was also the reason why I hadn't read the final revised version yet.

This world was not the same one from the 'Ways of Survival' that the Secretive Plotter lived through.

Yu Jung-Hyeok continued to speak. 'He could be right. His decisions might have been right, too. However, it's still not a good enough reason for you to yield to him.'

[Fable, 'Comrade of Life and Death', has begun its storytelling.]

'Because, we are also right,' said Yu Jung-Hyeok, the one who also endured the tragedies of the 1863 regression turns. Without a doubt, he too was also 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'. 'It still doesn't really feel real to me, but if I have been truly experiencing the 1864th turn, then… '

Yu Jung-Hyeok, gripping the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], shifted his gaze for a brief moment towards our companions on the Tongtian River.

Yi Ji-Hye's fleet was continuing their barrage, and Shin Yu-Seung's [Chimera Dragon]

was spewing out its Breath attack. Yi Hyeon-Seong gripped tightly by Jeong Hui-Won was also fighting hard as well. Meanwhile, Jang Ha-Yeong was running hard with Yi Gil-Yeong on her back.

None had died, and they were trying their best. So that they could see the end of this stinking world.

'Most likely, I came here to witness this sight.'

The [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and the [Heaven Shaking Sword] clashed once more. Two swords that didn't want to back down continued to roar on, their blades filled with the self-belief of their wielders.

The 'Secretive Plotter' shouted out. [[Do you still not understand? Even if you have regained your memories…]]

"How persistent. Just what do you expect to hear from me, then?"

[[… What?]]

"Do you want us to admit our loss? If not, do you want us to understand your life?"

[[Understand? You can keep your…!]]

"Indeed, you probably don't need it." Yu Jung-Hyeok replied disinterestedly. And because he was also Yu Jung-Hyeok, he could say these following words. "I too don't need you to understand me."

He said that, because they understood each other already.

Loud metallic clangs resounded out every time two swords collided. One Status violently clashed against another Status.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is roaring out!]

Two hellish landscape intertwined to create this battlefield.

Frustratingly, all I could do was to watch these two Yu Jung-Hyeoks. And do whatever it took to flip these damn pages.

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is thrashing violently.]

The winner couldn't easily be decided. Even then, the 'Secretive Plotter' remained utterly relaxed.

Perhaps that was obvious; our side only just got to use the power of the '1863rd' turn, after all. In terms of proficiency and familiarity, we were in an overwhelmingly disadvantageous position.

Maybe thinking that victory was in the bag now, the 'Secretive Plotter' leisurely asked a question. [[I'm curious. The puppet of the 'Most Ancient Dream', what is the conclusion you wish to see?]]

"And why should I answer you?"

[[Could it be that it's the same thing as that 'Demon King of Salvation'? Do you honestly believe that man?]]

Two blades clashed in mid-air and huge shockwaves spread out.

Yu Jung-Hyeok took a step back while wiping the blood off his lips.

[[You have no idea. No idea how pathetic that 'comrade' you trust so much actually is.

You don't know what the 'conclusion' of the world he wishes for is.]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' faintly grinned as he rained down his [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship].

[[When this world-line opened for the first time, Kim Dok-Ja's goal was to merely

'survive'.]]

「I dazedly raised my head and looked at Yu Sang-Ah. Quite likely, this woman will die.

And so will I.」

In the gap between the two blades, the Fables I lived through were breathing with life.

[[His next goal was to… To become stronger by using you.]]

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「"Make me your comrade. I can fill in the part you lack."」

「Yu Jung-Hyeok is definitely necessary in order to clear the numerous scenarios still remaining in the future.」

As if pages were flipping over, Fables I lived through were being projected right before our eyes. As if to stop that story, Yu Jung-Hyeok viciously swung his sword, but all of his attempts were denied by the Plotter's [Heaven Shaking Sword].

Meanwhile, the Plotter continued on. [[After that, well. After he found himself with a little bit of leeway, he even dared to dream of this 'world's conclusion'.]]

「"Hyung, aren't you going to make a wish for something?"

((((I quietly stared at Yi Gil-Yeong for a little while before making my reply.

(((("I made a wish to see the epilogue of a certain novel."」

The Great Sage Heaven's Equal said this before, that it wasn't only me who read other people. Just as I've read them, they were also reading me at the same time, he said.

He was right.

While I was busy reading the 'Ways of Survival', the 'Secretive Plotter' was also reading my story. He had been observing the entirety of the life I experienced.

[[Kim Dok-Ja began dreaming the same thing that I used to dream about once upon a time. He wanted to destroy the heaven's , and destroy the world beyond the 'Wall' that I couldn't overcome. He wanted to save every one of his comrades, and even…]]

「I saw the group of Nebulas floating in the middle of the darkened sky. ,

, … I shall never forget everything you have done.」

「"I will create a 'Fable' that hasn't existed before."」

Memories continued to stream by before our eyes. Some were as exactly as I remembered, while some were distorted or twisted around. Because it wasn't an intact 'Fable', that's why.

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This was the Plotter's interpretation of 'Kim Dok-Ja's story'.

「This is what the 'Secretive Plotter' feels.」

He continued to speak. [[Kim Dok-Ja will not achieve that goal now. Specifically, he won't be able to.]]

I wanted to ask why he thought that.

['The 4th Wall' is faintly shaking.]

[[A Fable could be made up, but it'll never tell a lie.]]

The Plotter's left hand touched Yu Jung-Hyeok's hair. The [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] reflexively slapped that hand away, but by then it was too late.

[Fable, 'One Who is Loved by an Archangel', has begun its storytelling.]

As if they were newborn babies, the Fables I possessed began crying out one by one.

Some of them were Fables I was familiar with. On the other hand…

[Fable, 'The Fifth Sun Wukong', has begun its storytelling.]

Some were Fables I had earned not too long ago. And…

[Fable, 'Rival Acknowledged by the Dragon', has begun its storytelling.]

[Fable, 'the Sea God's Comrade-in-Arms', has begun its storytelling.]

[Fable, 'Goryeo's Number Two Sword', has begun its storytelling.]

And, there were some Fables that I didn't even know I had them.

All of my Fables were speaking up at the same time.

[[Oh, 'Demon King of Salvation'. You can't destroy the .]]

Stars in the sky were flickering brightly. They were the same stars that I used to hate.

[Constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', is watching you.]

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is watching you.]

Those who had been watching me, allowing me to get this far.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is watching you.]

…My supposedly oldest enemies.

[[… Because, you do not hate the Constellations.]]

Even as I listened to the 'Secretive Plotter', I couldn't say anything. I wanted to say that it wasn't true. I wanted to say that I hated Constellations. I wanted to say that bringing them down was still one of my goals.

However, I couldn't. Because, goddammit, I…

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is watching you.]

…I knew now that not every star in the sky emitted the same sort of light as the others.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is watching you.]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is watching you.]

From the 'Absolute Throne' scenario, to the 'Demon World'…

Without the Probability they had gathered for us, I'd not be able to get this far.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is watching you.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is watching you.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is watching you.]

I had no choice but to acknowledge it.

All of my Fables were created together with them.

[[You do not wish for any 'loss' to occur to this world-line. Because you grew to love this story. And that is why…]] As if he was putting a full-stop on the story, the 'Secretive

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Plotter' declared loudly. [[… You shall never witness this world's

■■.]]

Thunders roared in the heavens.

The battle between the Great Sage and was intensifying.

[Many audience members are watching your battlefield.]

Constellations were looking down at us from above.

Some pitied me, while some got angry in my stead. Countless indirect messages flooded in endlessly.

Yu Jung-Hyeok remained wordless. The raindrops falling on the Tongtian River substituted for any spoken words.

I wanted to say something, anything.

But before I could open my mouth, though, someone else stole the opportunity away.

"So? What is it that you're trying to say here?" It was Yu Jung-Hyeok. "Since Kim DokJa doesn't have the qualification, you will see this world's ■■ in his stead, is that it?"

A faint crease formed on the forehead of the 'Secretive Plotter'. [[It seems that you can't think straight anymore. That man whom you thought of as your comrade is no different to the Constellations that you hate. That bastard is…]]

“…He's a pathetic fool, indeed." Yu Jung-Hyeok cut him off in the middle. "He was just some contracted worker for a no-name game developer, and his hobby was reading novels."

His shabby self-introduction-like words reverberated around the sky.

Those were the things I told Yu Jung-Hyeok some time ago.

"His specialty is to run his cocky mouth off, and he has this habit of throwing his life away so that we can overcome any and all impossible situations hindering us."

Yu Jung-Hyeok was talking about me that even I didn't know about.

"Someone like that managed to lead his companions this far."

The [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] shoved the [Heaven Shaking Sword] along with a loud "Creaaaak!!". For the first time ever since the battle commenced, Yu Jung-Hyeok was going on a concentrated offensive.

The Plotter's expression shook. Yu Jung-Hyeok's sword strikes were now digging into the Outer God's defences for the first time.

"Regardless of what the incoming conclusion is, this world wouldn't have come this far without him around."

[[You don't know anyt…!!]]

"It seems to me that you're the one who can't think straight here. Why are you interfering with this world-line, then?"

The wrathful [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] mowed the darkness down. The Plotter's figure wavered around greatly as he was pushed back.

Not missing that small opening, Yu Jung-Hyeok's sword rained down like a raging storm.

"What is your goal, anyway? If you found Kim Dok-Ja an eyesore, why didn't you kill him earlier? If you found him using your life to survive that disgusting, then…"

The [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] was now aiming at the neck of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is glaring at the Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

The moment when the two gazes collided, Yu Jung-Hyeok asked again.

"Why are you still watching this story?"

Fin.

Why did the 'Secretive Plotter' watch our Fable until now?

"Answer me."

He was the king of Outer Gods, and he had seen his 'Conclusion'. Meaning, if he wanted to eliminate me he'd have done so even if it cost a huge amount of Probability.

「However, he didn't do that.」

The 'Secretive Plotter' was now looking at Yu Jung-Hyeok and me.

His consciousness was far too deep and extensive that I'd not be able to understand even if I used the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] on him. That might've been the case, but at least in this moment, I thought that I could understand him.

- If I plagiarised the 'Ways of Survival' for my novel, then what were you plagiarised from?

Han Su-Yeong of the 1863rd turn asked me that question.

Even though I knew the answer, I didn't give her one. Because, I didn't want to admit it.

The world created by her during the 1863rd turn was, in a way, far

more complete than the life I had led. Everyone from the original novel was alive, and Seoul possessed the necessary infrastructure to deal with the Final Scenario, too.

The only thing missing in that picture was 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.

I thought that was unfair. I thought that the world copied from the original with its main character excluded was wrong.

「Certain copies can surpass the original.」

Despite that, I couldn't take my eyes off the world that Han Su-Yeong had created. Even when I thought it was wrong. Because, her story contained the elements that I was also aiming for.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

Did copyright exist for one's life, too?

But, was it okay to describe one's life as a 'work of an author'?

[[Demon King of Salvation.]]

The one who offered up his life for the sake of another world-line's success was now looking straight at me. The only man in this world who possessed the 'right' to witness the 'Conclusion'.

Even then, he couldn't see the end he wanted to see. Such a man grabbed Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] with his bare hand and spoke up. [[Is a story with no proper 'Ending' a failed story?]]

Fables flowed out from the fingers cut by the blade. Fables that I was intimately familiar with.

The story that I read for over ten years.

[[Do you truly, honestly believe that a 'proper conclusion' exists in this world?]]

Yu Jung-Hyeok hurriedly swung the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], causing the Plotter's figure to distance himself.

'Stay sharp, Kim Dok-Ja. He's going to come at us seriously now.'

[Attribute, 'Demon King Slayer', is activating!]

[Attribute, 'Terror of Stars', is activating!]

The sword made to cut down Demon Kings and Constellation began crying out.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is howling out!]

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is continuing with its storytelling!]

A person who completed a 'Great Fable' through nothing but his own life was right before us.

Kka-gagagagack!!

We couldn't handle the approaching Fable and were forced back. Like soaked cotton, the whole body felt heavy. The Tongtian's waters overturned and the bottom of the river got exposed.

We used the exposed bottom as our support and swung the sword towards the sky.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Destruction Technique.

Breaking the Sky Meteor Strike.

The thunderbolt stabbing into the sky shot out from the tip of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. The Statuses of a Demon King and a Constellation, as well as a Transcender, were added on top of the multiple sword lights that hacked the sky like a falling meteor shower.

And the other side shifted his [Heaven Shaking Sword] as well.

Kwa-kwakwakwa!!

He also possessed the same techniques we possessed. Two identical meteor showers collided in the air and a massive explosion rang out.

When the technique was the same, what decided the outcome was the proficiency as well as the Status of the Fable.

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is remembering the story.]

Unfortunately, we couldn't claim an advantage in either of those aspects.

'Kim Dok-Ja!'

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That didn't mean we'd back off here, though.

I desperately unleashed other Fables while still operating the 「Hellscape of Eternity」.

[Fable, 'One who Murdered the Outer God', has begun its storytelling!]

The reason why our opponent held the upper hand was due to the two attributes –

'Demon King Slayer' and 'Terror of Stars'. In that case, we needed to unshackle the Fable that allowed us to fight against the 'Outer God'.

Ku-gugugugu!!

One Status collided with another. Blood trickled down Yu Jung-Hyeok's nose. However, he didn't back away.

Not just him, but even the Fables seemed to understand it. They perhaps knew that, if they stopped telling their stories now, then all stories would stop right here.

[[It's useless.]]

The Plotter's Status moved. The Great Fable's aura that previously existed in vague ripples was rapidly changing. The「Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse」morphed into a giant, and its huge palm began crushing down on us.

Yu Jung-Hyeok roared out in opposition. "We too have Great Fables!"

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is continuing with its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is continuing with its storytelling!]

The world of the Great Fables streamed past before our eyes.

The「Demon World's Spring」that battled against Surya during the Demon King Selection.

The「Torch that Swallowed the Myth」we earned while experiencing the 'Gigantomachia'.

Two Great Fables, one taking on the figure of a lion while the other, a dragon, began biting and tearing into the giant's palm, and resisted it.

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[41st turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is watching you.]

[666th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is watching you.]

[999th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is watching you.]

Countless Yu Jung-Hyeoks within the 'Secretive Plotter' were observing this battle.

I recalled the [666] and [999] in my mind. They should be in there somewhere. Along with the Plotter himself, they had been watching me from the beginning of this worldline.

They were watching the heated battle between two Yu Jung-Hyeoks and were growing agitated.

[The「Stage Transformation」is activating!]

The sky split open, then light and darkness began creating a new 'world'.

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling.]

The「Season of Light and Darkness」was our 'Great Fable'. But at the same time, it was the Plotter's Fable, as well.

And even in this Great Fable, Yu Jung-Hyeok still lost to the Plotter.

[[You cannot win.]]

The effects of the「Stage Transformation」were absolute.

The history of defeat would only go on to create yet another history of defeat.

「A man wearing a white coat was looking up at the sky. And the man wearing the black coat met that gaze.」

The Plotter's eyes trembled.

Without a doubt, this was the exact same battle against the same Yu Jung-Hyeok as before. Yet, something was different. The Plotter looked down at his own coat.

It was black.

The colour of his coat was the opposite.

「Light and darkness were colliding. And one single watcher was observing the whole story.」

Incredible Status gathered on Yu Jung-Hyeok's right arm. It was clear which technique he was planning to use.

The greatest technique the current him could call upon: the [Shooting Star Slash].

Back during the Apocalypse Dragon battle, Yu Jung-Hyeok failed to defeat the

'Secretive Plotter' with this technique.

[Incarnation, 'Jeong Hui-Won', has temporarily transferred her share of the Great Fable.]

Everyone from in the not-too-distant battlefield was adding their strength to us. Everyone who held shares in the Great Fable was now participating in this battle.

[Incarnation, 'Han Su-Yeong', has temporarily transferred her share of the Great Fable.]

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yu-Seung', has temporarily transferred her share of the Great Fable.]

[Incarnation, 'Yi Gil-Yeong', has temporarily transferred his share of the Great Fable.]

Every Fable of gathered on Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. After seeing his Fable balloon up like that, the 'Secretive Plotter' began pouring out his own Status as well.

They might be two identical Yu Jung-Hyeoks, but the Fables they created were completely different.

「Who is Yu Jung-Hyeok?」

The Fables they possessed acted like that question's answer.

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is continuing with its storytelling.]

The Fable of the 'Secretive Plotter' was Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1st regression turn, 2nd, then 100th, and even the 1000th. A Fable built up solely by one person's existence piling up on top of one another.

「All tragedies had become dull, and only one being's existence grew bloated.」

The sword light from the swung [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] opposed that very Fable.

[Fable, 'Comrade of Life and Death', is continuing with its storytelling.]

That was Yu Jung-Hyeok's reply.

[Fable, 'Child of the Past and Future', has begun its storytelling.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok was Shin Yu-Seung.

[Fable, 'Judge of Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling.]

He was Jeong Hui-Won, and…

[Fable, 'False Saviour', is continuing with its storytelling.]

He was also Han Su-Yeong. And then…

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', is continuing with its storytelling!]

And, he was me.

Kwa-aaaaah!!

The [Shooting Star Slash] collided with the Plotter's Great Fable. This fight was quite literally at a deadlock, and a moment's carelessness could very well decide the victor.

Every Fable we possessed powerfully slammed forward. And then…

[666th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is…]

A very small change occurred in the midst of this battle.

[362nd turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is…]

A deafening boom went off, and the exploding spray of the river water formed a curtain of grey fog. The river water then rushed down on us and swept Yu Jung-Hyeok's body away. His consciousness was fading.

I subbed for him and dragged the Incarnation Body towards some nearby floating debris to climb on top of it.

When I took a closer look, though, it wasn't some normal piece of debris, but a small island created out of the corpses of the 'Outer Gods', instead.

It was then that I heard a voice.

[[There is only one difference between you and I.]]

As the grey fog of river water rescinded, the figure of the 'Secretive Plotter' flopped down on the corpse island revealed itself.

[[You simply got lucky, and I didn't.]]

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut!

His black coat was in a tattered mess. Sparks were dancing all over his body.

[1562nd turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is…]

[1321st turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is…]

'Yu Jung-Hyeoks' inside him were now rebelling against him. They were refusing to heed the Plotter's will.

[999th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' wishes to see the end of the 1864th turn.]

His Status was decreasing little by little. And his body was also gradually shrinking, as well. His bulging muscles were getting smaller, and his height decreased, too.

Soon, the 'Secretive Plotter' that lost his Status had morphed into the figure of a boy.

I staggered back to my – Yu Jung-Hyeok's – feet.

"You…"

I wanted to say something, but no voice wanted to come out.

[The absolute majority of the audience are shivering at your battle!]

[A portion of the audience is…]

We won.

Countless indirect messages flooded in, but not one of them entered my head.

The 'Secretive Plotter' was sitting on his butt all alone on top of this island. The

[Heaven Shaking Sword] stabbed into the floor was the only thing supporting him.

While gripping the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] tightly, I cautiously approached him.

Even though he was the same Yu Jung-Hyeok, why did he have to live such a different life? Why did this guy have to overcome all these tragedies by himself?

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is faltering in its storytelling.]

Was it because he didn't have any comrades?

Comrades…

[41st turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is staying vigilant of you.]

…No, he had.

He definitely had comrades.

'Kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks' emerging out of his body were standing right there.

[Youcan'tYoucan'tYoucan'tYoucan'tYoucan't]

Kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks were now surrounding him protectively. And then, the 'Outer Gods' were surroundings those kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks.

[TheresonlyoneTheresonlyoneTheresonlyone]

The history that the 'Secretive Plotter' had lived through – every part of the 'Ways of Survival' he lived through was now protecting him.

[DontkillhimDontkillhimDontkillhimDontkillhim]

They were stories that got discarded because they failed to reach the 'Conclusion'.

I moved Yu Jung-Hyeok's body again and lowered my posture towards them. When I reached out, one of the small Outer Gods bit the extended finger. Crimson blood formed on the tip of the bitten finger.

It was a lie that this world-line was a brand new story.

Even now, Yu Jung-Hyeok's story – the 'Ways of Survival' – hadn't ended yet.

'Kim Dok-Ja.'

He must've regained his consciousness, because Yu Jung-Hyeok began talking to me.

I didn't reply immediately, and made my way past the Outer Gods to approach the

'Secretive Plotter'.

Now in the form of a boy, he was looking up at me while being surrounded by the Outer Gods.

Yu Jung-Hyeok saw me holding the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] tightly and spoke.

'You'll regret this.'

「No, I won't.」

I raised the sword only to slowly sheathe it back in its scabbard.

「Besides, you weren't going to kill him, anyway.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok's retort came back a little later than usual. '…Even if we kill him, he'll simply regress again, anyway.'

Even if he was saying that, it was pretty clear what he was thinking of right now. We

had enough of this tragedy already.

[Many Constellations are watching you.]

[Many Constellations can't understand your decision.]

I didn't make this decision for the sake of earning a Fable. And I knew that this wouldn't even offer a tiny speck of solace to a life that lasted for 1864 lives.

But, even then…

"Secretive Plotter."

I called out and he looked up at me.

Even if this world had changed from the original story, even if this world was no longer a simple novel… If it wasn't for this guy's story, this world wouldn't have existed.

「Without him, the current Kim Dok-Ja wouldn't be here.」

I definitely owed him a debt. A debt that nothing could possibly repay.

"You said that a sentence once written, can never be changed, right? I disagree with that."

Indeed, sentences could be changed. Just like how the revised versions of the 'Ways of Survival' existed.

[[My Fable has already come to an end.]]

"…And then?"

[[… There is no 'then'. That is what it means to end.]]

"Some stories can only begin anew after coming to its end. Back in the world I lived in, there was this guy who repeatedly said that his story would end that year, but he kept it going for over ten years."

And that very story was what helped me to survive.

"I think I heard that the story was supposed end at around the 500th chapter, but before I knew it, it went past 1000th, and then, it shot past 2000 chapters."

[[… What is it that you want to say?]]

"That story was written up to the 3149th chapter… but the 3150th hasn't been written."

Even if a full stop had been laid down, as long as the next sentence was written, then the story would continue on.

The 'Secretive Plotter' should be well aware of this, too. Because, he was a guy who had been telling his story far longer than anyone else out there.

I spoke with a grin on my face. "It feels like that story is still continuing on even right now. And maybe, it is really continuing on. I feel relieved, actually."

[[You…]]

"Because, I'm a Constellation, you see." As the Plotter's expression hardened, I added something else with a cold voice. "Constellations are creatures like that."

This was the answer I had chosen. This was the only way to not belittle him, even if it ends up hurting him.

The Secretive Plotter's eyes were glaring straight at me. [[… That story you bastard have seen…]] His seething voice was directed at me. [[… Will result in your death. It will show you the worst end result imaginable. And as for your Nebula…!]]

"Doesn't matter."

I knew that what I was saying here could be seen as irresponsible. My petty attempt at atonement could bring upon untold misery and misfortune for everyone else. I knew that.

Even then, this was the best I could do right now.

"Every time that happens, I'll do my best to fight back."

The Plotter's expression was changing – to one that I couldn't make. An expression

seemingly reserved for when analysing the ends of the distant universe. With that sort of expression, he scanned the battlefield.

The rain falling on the battlefield had stopped, and the storm clouds that the Great Sage Heaven's Equal had summoned were receding away.

The 'Great War Against the Heavenly Worlds' was drawing to a close.

's fallen Constellations were looking up at the Great Sage and the Yogoes.

The sense of defeat thickly drawn on their faces told me who today's winner was.

[Currently, the Fable chamber 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」 is in possession of the 'sacred texts'.]

[Scenario will automatically conclude if the sacred texts are guarded for one hour.]

[Ten seconds currently remaining until the conclusion of the scenario.]

Finally, the lengthy scenario was coming to a close.

I looked up at the blindingly bright skies of the . The 'Great Dokkaebis'

who'd control the Final Scenario were there, glaring at me.

[Scenario has concluded.!]

[Fable chamber 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」 has won the scenario!]

Bright messages announcing an incredible amount of reward payout and words of congratulations sent by the Constellations rained down and blanketed the sky above.

I spotted Shin Yu-Seung, with Biyu riding on top of her head, hurriedly running towards me while waving around the 'sacred texts'.

The title of the texts was the following:

「I've Become the Retired SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong」

"Ahjussi!"

[Shares for 'Outer God' in the applicable scenario is enormous!]

[is acknowledging the existence of 'Outer God'.]

['Outer Gods' can now officially participate in the scenarios!]

(As the blinding rays of light accompanied them, the Yogoes all rose up to the air.) (Yogoes gathering around Sun Wukong as their centre all howled towards the heavens like a single colony.)

I heard their cries.

(It sounded like a song from an unfamiliar foreign country.) Next up, I spotted Jeong Hui-Won carrying my Incarnation Body while waving her hand. I might have heard it wrong, but I thought I heard her say "I finally got you" or something like that.

Next up, I saw Yu Sang-Ah, now the 'Sakyamuni's Successor', and Jang Ha-Yeong carrying the enervated Yi Gil-Yeong.

I looked to my side to discover the 'Secretive Plotter' witnessing the same spectacle as me.

(The 'Journey to the West' will end here.)

One scenario came to an end, yet the story continued on. However, even that story would have an end.

[You have acquired a new 'Great fable'!]

[You have partially completed the fourth condition of the 'Hidden Scenario – A Single Fable'!]

And so, ever so quietly…

[Your Great Fable has completed the first half of the 'Conclusion'!]

The message foretelling the end of this world could be heard.

[Your Nebula has acquired the qualification to enter the 'Final Scenario'.]

Fin.

[95th Main Scenario has concluded!]

After the scenario ended, the Great Sage and the 'Outer Gods' gathered in the centre of the Tongtian River to celebrate.

[Those with the identity of 'extras' in the Great Fable 「Journey to the West」 has now been freed.]

Outer Gods that became the scenario's slaves under the 's and 's combined suppression were now being freed.

[OhOhOhOhOhOh]

[MonkeykingMonkeykingMonkeyking]

Some of them even happened to be the ones that followed the 'Secretive Plotter' and joined the scenario belatedly. And as his Status grew weaker, they naturally began gravitating towards the Great Sage Heaven's Equal after he emerged as a new Outer God.

[Reward distribution will now commence!]

Incarnations saw the 95th scenario's reward items descending from the sky and their lips stretched wide in huge grins. Unfortunately for them, though, their joy was short-lived. Their gazes soon drifted over to a certain group of Incarnations receiving that huge cache of rewards over yonder.

"Wow, that…”

"I should've joined that Fable chamber…”

It was 's group. Each one of them received one million Coins as individual rewards, while some of them even acquired 's Star Relics, as

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well.

Since the rewards were being distributed according to the rules, none here could complain about this procedure, either.

[Nebula, , is protesting the scenario's fairness to the Bureau!]

No, there was someone who could – it was none other than the host themselves,

.

Of course, they would feel wronged by the fact that the rewards of the large-scale scenario they organised for themselves had ended up in the hands of a small Nebula.

[is ignoring the 's complaint.]

A portion of 's Constellations couldn't hold back their rage and were about to unleash their Statuses, but then, someone unexpected stopped them.

"Please, that's enough, everyone. We have lost." It was the greatest Incarnation of

, Fei Hu. "What would our Myth-grade Constellations think if they witnessed our current actions?"

's Myth-grade Constellations didn't participate in this 'Journey to the West'

scenario. They were simply watching the proceedings from the Final Scenario.

"Behave yourselves in a way that won't bring shame to our honour."

's Constellations heard the resolute voice of their Incarnation and lowered their heads belatedly, their cheeks flushing.

A bit further away, Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Ji-Hye were observing that spectacle.

“…That's a surprise."

"You can say that again."

All the influential individuals from the large Nebulas they had run into so far didn't want to acknowledge their victory. But it was a different story this time.

Maybe he sensed their gazes, Fei Hu formed a sheepish grin and approached the two.

"Incarnation Jeong Hui-Won."

Jeong Hui-Won got tense and held the Steelsword tightly. He was easily one of the strongest enemies she had ever faced so far.

But he began speaking in a warm voice. "Incarnation Jeong Hui-Won. Our battle this time left a deep impression on me."

“…Oh, okay."

"If an opportunity arises in the future, I'd love to invite you over to China and treat you to a hearty meal."

One could spot slightly flushed cheeks in between Fei Hu's sideboards. Yi Ji-Hye definitely caught that, and through [Voice Projection], spoke up in pure admiration.

-… Wow. Even though the world went down the crapper, a guy like him still managed to survive.

Jeong Hui-Won dazedly stared back at him. Meanwhile, he couldn't dare to meet her gaze and began fidgeting slightly.

Yi Ji-Hye lightly elbowed Jeong Hui-Won in the side.

- Eonni, what are you doing?? He's probably the best out of all the men we've seen so far, you know? Sure, he's far below my Master in the looks department, but still…

"I'm sorry, but…” Jeong Hui-Won replied in a polite voice as if she was an expert from Murim. "I've decided to dedicate my life to the sword, so…”

"It's the same story for me."

“…Pardon?"

"I'd like to invite you to China and share our views on the ways of the sword for the whole night."

Fei Hu's eyes burned passionately as he began his long-winded speech, prompting Jeong Hui-Won to feel a bit repulsed for a moment there. She glanced to her side and discovered Yi Ji-Hye, who used to be cheering on with her sparkling eyes, now shaking

her head in helplessness. If this whole thing was nothing more than their misunderstanding, fine, but if not, then something rather bothersome might happen in the future.

Tsu-chuchuchut…

Her Sponsor was unable to watch this anymore and the sounds of her making a move could be heard next.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…]

'It's fine, Uriel. Please be still.'

If Uriel unnecessarily stepped up here, then the dying embers of the war might light up again. If it was left up to her, though, she might just fight him one-on-one now and nip the bud right away, but the gazes of the Constellations nearby were fixed on them, so…

"I'm sorry, I'm already…"

Just as she got that far, the Steelsword she held suddenly began vibrating. Yi Hyeon-Seong had transformed into this sword. For some reason, though, she felt just a little resentful.

Why couldn't this sword be a talking sword?

"What the heck is this? Get out of the way!"

The one to help her out was, surprisingly enough, Han Su-Yeong. It was unknown when she entered the scenario, but regardless, she shoved Fei Hu away and made her entrance before throwing out a question, her eyes scanning the surroundings.

"Where is Kim Dok-Ja?"

…Kim Dok-Ja?

Jeong Hui-Won shifted her gaze to a certain Incarnation Body slumped on her back.

Fei Hu glared at the uninvited guest Han Su-Yeong with unhappy

eyes. Jeong Hui-Won alternated her gaze between him and Kim Dok-Ja on her back and a nice idea suddenly

popped up in her head.

"My liege!"

As if she was re-enacting the 'Flag Contest', she quickly embraced Kim Dok-Ja and shouted out in an impassioned voice.

"My liege, are you alright??"

His pale Incarnation Body sagged limply in her arms and shook around a little.

"Oh, my king!"

Everyone was now looking at her. Yi Ji-Hye's jaw dropped slightly, while Han Su-Yeong looked dumbfounded.

As for Fei Hu…

"Ah…”

He looked as if he understood everything now.

"I see, Incarnation Jeong Hui-Won. So, that's how it was…”

His gaze shifted from Jeong Hui-Won, Han Su-Yeong and to Yi Ji-Hye, before eventually landing on Kim Dok-Ja's face next. He sneakily bit his lip. Like a tragic extra feeling envious of the chosen protagonist, he slowly lowered his head and turned around to leave.

Yi Ji-Hye watching that sent a [Voice Projection] to Jeong Hui-Won again.

- It's alright now, eonni. He's gone. Looks like he's fallen into some kind of a weird misunderstanding, though.

However, Jeong Hui-Won didn't stop.

"My liege! Wake up! My liege! If you don't wake up, I'll kill you!"

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!!

Kim Dok-Ja's left cheek began swelling up after her palm kept hitting him there.

Han Su-Yeong stared at her with a less-than-impressed expression and asked. "… What are you doing?"

"Revenge."

She nodded her head in acceptance, and took over from Jeong Hui-Won to grab hold of Kim Dok-Ja's neck and shook him around hard.

"Hey, you."

"…"

"I told you that I'd create your new Modifier, didn't I? But then, you couldn't wait and got yourself a new one anyway?"

"…"

"Were you listening to my narration? Did you hear that last part? How was it? It's fine to come out clean, you idiot. I know you were moved to tears. Weren't you?"

Kim Dok-Ja still didn't reply. Han Su-Yeong frowned deeply and began slapping the other cheek that wasn't swollen yet.

Shin Yu-Seung couldn't watch this sight any longer and hurriedly ran over. "What are you all doing?!"

"Don't worry, he's still breathing. He's not dead yet."

Despite all this ruckus, he showed no signs of waking up. That caused opinions to split up among the group.

"Most likely, he's deliberately not waking up here. He knows he's in the wrong."

"Makes sense. In that case, how about we let him taste pain so unbearable that he…"

"Aren't you all being a bit too much right now??"

Such a situation carried on for another five minutes. But, even after another ten

minutes, he still showed no signs of regaining consciousness. That's when the expressions of the group grew serious as well.

"…What's going on here?"

Eventually, the group had to search for one person capable of explaining this situation for them. It was Yu Jung-Hyeok lying unconscious next to Kim Dok-Ja.

"Hey, Yu Jung-Hyeok! Open your eyes! Why isn't this idiot Kim Dok-Ja waking up??"

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!!

His firmer cheek didn't swell up as easily as Kim Dok-Ja's. How long went by like this?

Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes cracked open just a little.

"I am Yu Jung-Hyeok…"

"Dammit, what's wrong with this guy now?"

Like a mental patient, he kept repeating the same thing over and over

again.

Yu Sang-Ah belatedly made her entrance and stopped Han Su-Yeong. "Please stop grilling Jung-Hyeok-ssi like that. His memories got jumbled by the Fable so he's most likely not himself right now."

"Sang-Ah eonni!"

The group belatedly came back to life with the joy of reunion and gathered around Yu Sang-Ah. A different type of vibe was now coming off from her newly-reincarnated body.

Han Su-Yeong observed the change and asked a question with a smirk. "I heard that you're now the 'Sakyamuni's Successor', but you haven't shaved your head."

"Religions nowadays have gotten rather trendy, you know."

"Welcome back. You were a bit late, but still."

"It was difficult to return just in time before you caused us trouble, but I made it."

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"…I'm not the one causing trouble. It's this guy."

Yu Sang-Ah shrugged her shoulders and extended her hand towards the unconscious Kim Dok-Ja. The 'Constrictive Headband' on his head began emitting a bright glow just then.

Jeong Hui-Won nodded her head in satisfaction. "That's a good idea. I guess he won't be able to run away now."

"…It's unfortunate, but he seems to have run away already."

"Eh?"

"His soul hasn't returned to his body."

A very thin thread was extending from the headband on Kim Dok-Ja's head to the sky above. It seemed to be connected somewhere. Yu Sang-Ah observed the end of this thread and spoke up. "But, don't worry. He didn't go far. And it doesn't seem that he left on his own volition, either."

Didn't leave on his own volition – the meaning behind those words was clear.

Han Su-Yeong hurriedly looked around the vicinity and asked. "Where did the

'Secretive Plotter' disappear to??"

*

The view of the dimensional portal was moving past me at a rapid pace.

Everything happened in the blink. The moment I deactivated [Omniscient Readers Viewpoint], something grabbed my soul, and by the time I regained my wits, I was already jumping through this portal alongside the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Now normally, something like this would've been impossible. But it was a special case this time.

[You failed to uphold the 'Existence Pledge'.]

[Your soul will be temporarily tied to the Existence Pledge's contract.]

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[Your contractor will possess the rights to your soul for the next 24 hours.]

I looked at the messages rising up in the air and chuckled hollowly.

- I had no idea the [Existence Pledge] could be used this way.

The [Existence Pledge] – do not contact during the scenario's duration or reveal my identity.

That was the only thing I failed to uphold during the scenario.

Since the scenario's contents changed mid-way, I figured there was some room for differences in opinions, but it seemed the had judged that I went against the pledge in the end.

- Are you going to kill me?

The 'Secretive Plotter', now in the form of a boy, was enveloped from head to toe in bursts of powerful sparks. I sensed countless Yu Jung-Hyeoks looking at me from inside his Fable. But, I didn't sense any hostility from it.

He clearly wasn't planning to kill me.

Just like what Yu Jung-Hyeok opined earlier, if this guy wanted me dead, there were several opportunities to do so already.

Not too long afterwards, the portal closed. Our destination was a familiar one. It was a forest covered in the overgrown darkness.

It was the N'Gai's Forest, the home of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[[Go inside.]]

Along with those words, my soul got sucked into something.

I blinked, and my eyes moved. However, I had neither arms nor legs. I wondered what on earth was going on here and looked around, only to discover my reflection in the mirror on a nearby wall.

…I was now a small Murim dumpling.

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Somehow, I got the feeling that it was the same figure that [999] was

using before.

"How does it feel like to end up as a dumpling?!"

Not sure when they popped out, but well, a lynch mob of the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks rushed at me and began kicking me around. Thankfully, it didn't hurt all that much due to them being all kkomas.

I hunkered down to stop the dumpling skin from tearing and shouted out.

- Not sure what you're trying to do here, but you can't stop me. In 24 hours, I'll return to my Incarnation body, you know. If you want to kill me, you better do so now.

Of course, I didn't really mean that he should kill me.

I asked the 'Secretive Plotter', perched up on the throne.

- Secretive Plotter, what's your real goal? Why are you keeping me alive?

My question caused the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks to stop hitting me.

The 'Secretive Plotter' looked down at me. There he was, the strongest Outer God as well as the Constellation that I knew of. Also, the strongest Yu Jung-Hyeok out of all Yu Jung-Hyeoks.

- I know that we'd have never won if you really went all out.

Even if Yu Jung-Hyeok regained the memories of 1864 regression turns and combined his powers with mine, it was still impossible to surpass the Plotter through purely the Status of our Fable.

Not only was he the total sum of the histories spanning from 0th turn all the way up to 1863, but he also endured an uncountable period of time afterwards, on top of that.

Even then, the 'Secretive Plotter' chose to lose rather than to kill us.

"Because, you are a necessity, you fool." [41] listening to me yap on replied. "You possess the last fragment of the 'Final Wall', that's why."

Fin.

Bihyung was in a very good mood. It couldn't be helped, since the Dokkaebi had witnessed the scenario playing out in the panel right before his eyes.

- Every time that happens, I'll do my best to fight back.

Accompanying Kim Dok-Ja's voice was the scenario conclusion notice. Indirect messages from innumerable Constellations flooded in, and the whole of

was trembling grandly.

A new owner of the Great Fable 「Journey to the West」 had been decided.

'He did it. That Kim Dok-Ja, he really pulled it off.'

A storyteller was supposed to remain neutral. The thing was, though, all judges secretly rooted for a team they liked. This was true for Bihyung as well.

Like a parent looking at his wonderfully-matured children, Bihyung stroked the faces appearing on the screen with a deeply moved expression.

[Congratulations, Bihyung Director-nim.]

The subordinate Dokkaebis around him offered their congratulations. They all knew that Bihyung had been watching for a long time.

[I just knew they would pull through.]

[M-me too. Me too…!]

Not only that, some of them had been cheering on the

alongside him, too. Several carried expressions just as excited as Bihyung's.

For these Dokkaebis that only sought out new, potential stimulations in order to find the next story's objective, being this earnest about something was indeed an exceedingly

rare thing.

[These kids are mine. Stop drooling over them.]

[Hahat! Of course we wouldn't…]

It was then an urgent piece of news arrived for him.

[Director. The Great Dokkaebi, 'Baram' is…]

[You've been promoted!]

…A promotion?

[Bihyung Director-nim, truly, honestly, congratulations!]

[Looks like the Bureau is doing its job properly for once!]

Bihyung couldn't make heads nor tails while subjected to the outpouring of messages.

He was an 'upper-rank Dokkaebi', not to mention the director of the Seoul branch. He had already climbed to the highest-possible position through one's hard work alone.

However, getting a promotion here could only mean…

[…Director-nim?]

Without a doubt, this should be a good thing.

But why was he overcome with this ominous foreboding?

[Great Dokkaebi is waiting for you.]

Bihyung was guided by lower-ranked Dokkaebis to a portal, and entered it. Soon, the thick fog receded away to reveal the figure of a Great Dokkaebi waiting for him at the end of a grey-coloured passage.

[You've come, Bihyung.]

[Baram-nim.]

As if to imply that Bihyung had worked hard, Baram patted him on the shoulder and spoke up. [Congratulations. Your promotion has been decided.]

[…Pardon me?]

[We need to do something about your dazed expression. Don't you understand? It's been decided that you'll be chosen as the last one to become the 'Great Dokkaebi'.]

The Great Dokkaebi. The highest honour that all storytellers dreamed of reaching.

Something that he only daydreamed about had now become a reality, leaving Bihyung utterly bewildered and lost.

[…Great Dokkaebi? You mean, I am?]

[That's right. This promotion is unprecedented in the history of .]

Baran chuckled contently and took the lead. Bihyung didn't even know where they were going and simply chased after him. He had so many things he wanted to ask.

Just where was this place, and also…

[You'll soon become a Great Dokkaebi, so it's about time that you meet that 'person', no?]

Baram smiled as if he could see through Bihyung's thoughts.

[When you say 'that person', could you be…]

Even though he did ask, Bihyung could already guess the answer.

The surrounding air seemed to distort and faint traces of sparks bounced around in the atmosphere. When he took a closer look, those sparks were taking on the shapes of letters. Something was before him, a being that he had never seen before.

[We've arrived.]

They circled around the gallery and went past the fog-covered passageway to reach a massive hall.

No, could this place even be called a 'hall'?

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It was so humongous that its dimensions couldn't even be estimated. And inside this place, there was a wide wall spanning across it. The length of this mysterious wall could also not be measured due to its sheer, immense size.

Letters engraved on the surface of the wall seemed to be burning; many cracks and various damages, both large and small, could be seen on its surface.

In that moment, Bihyung got the feeling that he had seen that wall

from somewhere.

[…The Plate of Revelation?]

It was undoubtedly the Plate of Revelation. Although its shape was different, that 'wall'

the Constellations received their revelations from possessed the similar overall vibe.

However, why was another 'Plate of Revelation' here? And also, what was up with its humongous size…?

[Everyone has gathered, I see.]

The moment he heard that voice, Bihyung prostrated on the floor even before he realised it. He might have dealt with countless Constellations until now, but at least this time, he couldn't control his nervousness.

He couldn't even guess the vastness of the Status felt from that voice.

He glanced to his side and saw that all the Great Dokkaebis, including Baram, were prostrating towards the front as well.

Someone was standing in front of the 'Plate of Revelation'.

Bihyung hid his shivering and slowly raised his head. And that's when he realised it.

So, that was it, then… Now, he understood it.

That creature was the absolute being that ruled the and controlled the .

The 'King of Stories'.

The King extended his lengthy and pale hand to stroke the wall while slowly opening

its mouth.

[The 'One Fable' that decides the next world will now be chosen.]

*

"You saying that I have the last fragment of the 'Final Wall'?"

"That's right."

[41]'s words made me frown deeply.

I could guess more or less on what they were talking about. The 'Final Wall' – I tried to gather information on that thing during this regression turn, too. It was one of the things that never got fully explained in the original 'Ways of Survival'. I was pretty sure of this 'Wall' being the clue that would determine the end of this regression turn.

And as for this 'last fragment' thing they were talking about…

[Exclusive skill, 'The 4th Wall', is powerfully activating!]

「Kim Dok Ja」

Don't worry. I'll never hand you over to them.

I slowly blinked my eyes and focused. The 'Secretive Plotter' was staring at me. He might have lost a lot of his Status, but he was still the strongest Constellation I knew, and he was an 'Outer God' to boot.

I recalled the first day I arrived at the N'Gai's Forest and opened my mouth. "We talked about this before, didn't we. You said that I need to figure out why I had to be brought here before the 'Three Divine Questions and Answer' came to an end."

[[I did.]]

"You actually want to see the end of this world, don't you? You might be saying this and that, but you too have placed your hope on this world-line."

The Plotter's brows quivered ever so slightly.

No matter how hard he denied being Yu Jung-Hyeok, he still failed to get rid of his old habits.

"And for that purpose, you need [the 4th Wall] that I possess. That's why you're keeping me alive. Am I right?"

He didn't answer me. If he was planning to behave like that, I could think of a way to get him to talk.

Tsu-chuchuchut.

"I didn't get to hear that final answer to the Three Divine Questions."

['Three Divine Questions and Answers' has resumed!]

[You have one more right to ask a question.]

Back then, I asked the 'Secretive Plotter' this.

The 「Three Ways to Survive a Ruined World.」

- 'Secretive Plotter'. Are you someone who knows the epilogue of that novel?

"'Secretive Plotter'. Just what did you see at the 'conclusion'?"

The 'Ways of Survival' I read ended with the 3149th chapter. However, the Plotter lived on past that, even though I didn't get to see it. He survived that unrecorded history and reached the conclusion reserved only for him.

Just what did he see in that place?

What was there that it prompted him to become an 'Outer God' and appear in this world-line?

[41] stepped forward first to answer my question. He shouted at me with a slightly angry face. "That question is…!!"

[[41st.]]

Kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks all shut their mouths up after the Plotter stopped them. The

'Yu Jung-Hyeok' currently in the shape of a boy – the 'Secretive Plotter' – was looking straight at me.

For a moment there, I felt a bit weirded out. Yu Jung-Hyeok's childhood years had never been fully explained in the 'Ways of Survival'. No, it just got a few brief passing mentions in the form of reminiscence.

Of course, not getting a proper explanation didn't mean he had no childhood to begin with.

It was kind of similar to the 3150th chapter of the 'Ways of Survival'. Yu Jung-Hyeok was born in a place I didn't know of, and managed to survive until he became the story's protagonist.

[[Just how much of my journey was described in that novel you read?]]

The protagonist with a face I didn't know was asking me.

I hesitated slightly before replying. "… Up until when you were about to reach the Dokkaebi King."

I recalled the final moments of the 'Ways of Survival'.

He journeyed to kill the Dokkaebi King; wading past the 'Final Fog', Yu Jung-Hyeok rushed into the final phase of the story. There was no further explanation on what happened afterwards or what he saw there.

That was also the reason why I got flustered back then while reading the last released chapter. I grew scared, wondering if it really was the

end.

[[What was I like during those last moments?]]

Now that unexpected question got me truly flustered.

I didn't think he'd ask me about something like that.

"Why would you…?"

[[Did it look like I succeeded? Did it look like I'd get to achieve my goal at the end of it all?]]

The moment I heard his question, I was overcome with this unexplainable stifling feeling. I couldn't understand why the 'Secretive Plotter' asked me that. My thoughts regarding that were not important at all. Not even by a small speck…

…Wait, was it really not as important?

"You…”

My lips barely managed to bob up and down.

I wasn't prepared for that question. However, I still needed to answer it regardless of whether I was ready or not.

「In that very moment, she realised that this world had completely left her hands.」

Memories from [Peaceland] came bubbling up – the mangaka Asuka Ren's expression as she let go of the world she had created. The duty of the person who had created a new world…

I wasn't like her. I didn't write the 'Ways of Survival', but I was…

「This story was able to see the light of the world all thanks to you, Dok-Ja-nim.」

…I was someone who had witnessed the story's end.

"You did succeed. Because, you gave it your all."

Answering him was the duty of the one who had seen the story until its conclusion. I carefully and slowly recalled all the sentences I still remembered.

"Didn't matter which regression it was, you always made the best choice you could've made. I don't know what kind of a conclusion you reached, but you were not wrong."

All of Yu Jung-Hyeok's regression turns brushed past my mind. Everything he earned, and then, all the things he had lost during them…

"I'm sure that your comrades thought the same, too."

…And also, his lonely back as he reached the final page by himself.

"However…"

Did I possess the qualification to say this, though?

I couldn't tell.

"You didn't look all that happy for some reason during your final moments."

Even now, the scenes I read didn't want to leave my mind.

「Finally, Yu Jung-Hyeok who had lost everything was looking at the fog. The hollow answer he'd been searching for was just beyond that fog.」

The face of the 'Secretive Plotter' that exactly matched the description from that scene, was now looking at me.

[[I see.]]

“…Why did you suddenly ask me that?"

[[I was merely curious. You're the only one who had seen 'that' from the beginning until the end, after all.]]

I couldn't say anything back to him.

[[I was curious about what my life meant through the eyes of someone other than mine. That's all.]]

Fin.

What the 'Secretive Plotter' said felt as hollow as words coming from someone who had lost all meaning in his life.

I spoke up as if to rebel against that hollowness. "… Your life saved someone else's."

To someone who had lost so much, the truth of saving a kid whom he didn't even know the name of wouldn't be much of a consolation. The boy was someone completely unrelated to him, after all. That boy was not his comrade or his family member.

I tried to open my lips several times, yet I still couldn't say anything else. The life I lived was no help whatsoever in the quest to save this guy.

The 'Secretive Plotter' looked at me struggling and spoke. [[When I first saw you, I believed that I needed to bring you under my wings.]]

Bring me under his wings. For some reason, I recalled the moments I first encountered him.

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- Please select your Sponsor.

- The selected backer will become your dependable sponsor.

1. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon

2. Demon-like Judge of Fire

3. Secretive Plotter

4. Prisoner of the Golden Headband

+

…I remembered it.

That did happen. The 'Secretive Plotter' showed up during my first Sponsor Selection as my third potential choice. He really did try to become my Sponsor.

[[After that, I continued to observe this world-line. Sometimes, I was surprised. I was just as surprised by the fact that I was surprised. Because, I hadn't been surprised by anything for a long time.]]

I knew that. During this world-line's story, he watched what we did and sent various indirect messages. If I dug through the indirect message logs, I should be able to read the ones he sent to me.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is intrigued by your choice.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is impressed by the level of your stupidity.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is disappointed by your flippant declaration.]

[Eyes of the Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', are sparkling after he heard your plan.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is curious about your scheme.]

…

Those messages made the first actual face-to-face with him rather awkward for me. I knew now that [666] and other Yu Jung-Hyeoks were responsible for those indirect messages, but still…

[[I had to decide – whether to continue observing this distorted world, or to destroy it.]]

"…Was that why you sent me to the 1863rd turn?"

The Plotter nodded his head. His choice led to the beginning of this 'world-line'.

He continued on. [[It was roughly a similar reason why I gave this turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok the information on the 1863rd turn. I had a need to test you. To find out whether you

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or this turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok was the more suitable candidate to witness the conclusion.]]

"Okay, so your choice was?"

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply and simply stared at me, before opening his mouth.

[[There is a massive wall at the end of this world. It's the 'Final Wall' that can only be opened when all the keys have been gathered together.]]

- You have acquired answers to all the questions.

- The 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' has ended.

I realised it then. That reply of his was the answer to my 'three questions'.

Sparks dancing around the 'Secretive Plotter' grew more vicious. Certain information would require the consumption of a great deal of Probability just by mentioning it.

And if the info was related to the end of this world, then it was only obvious that the Probability cost would be enormous, too.

The 'Final Wall'.

That was the 'Conclusion' the Secretive Plotter had encountered in his epilogue.

[[The 'fragment' you possess is the last key that I've been searching for.]]

I got nervous and backed away. As I was in the shape of a [Murim dumpling], it was pretty hard to take backward steps, but whatever the case might have been, I simply had to create some distance between us.

If the Plotter's goal was [The 4th Wall] in my possession, then he…

He, who was busy clenching and unfurling his fists, came across as rather terrifying for some reason.

Other kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks were also looking up at the Plotter with tense expressions.

[[Far too many things had to be distorted to create this world-line. I can't decide whether leaving you alone is the right thing to do or not.]]

The distorted world-line. The broken Probability.

I heard about those two things lots of times already.

"Okay, so what? What do you want, then?"

I just threw out whatever came to my mind. The important thing was to buy time. I needed to drag this out as long as possible and return to my original body. That was important.

"I don't really get what you're trying to say here. I don't get all this confusing mumbo-jumbo about the end result devouring the cause and whatnot. However, regardless of what, my comrades and I did our absolute best to come this far. The conclusion is practically around the corner for us."

I could almost see it, the conclusion to this previously-unwritten story.

[[Seeing the conclusion is not everything. The truly important thing is to witness the correct conclusion.]]

"Correct conclusion? Deciding that would be…"

[[A story with distorted Probability will always go on to create a calamity.]]

I became dazed from that declaration, something that only a Dokkaebi would make.

"That's not like you. With something you haven't even seen yet…"

It was then an earthquake suddenly erupted out. Something collapsed with a loud

'Thud!!'

The wine glass on the circular table tumbled over; the whole forest was shaking around.

"…What's going on??"

This was definitely not a natural tremor.

The 'Secretive Plotter' slowly stood up from the throne and walked past me. His empty eyes were now peering deeply at the wide view of the forest.

The N'Gai's Forest was enveloped in the violent conflagration.

His forest was burning up.

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[SavemeSavemeSavemeSavemeSavemeSaveme]

All those trees, so tall that they might pierce the heavens above, were now burning away into ashes. 'Outer Gods' hidden within the forest screamed. The hall's temperature rapidly shot up from the incredible power of the flames. This couldn't have been a simple arson.

Even I could sense it.

Someone possessing incredible Status was attacking this place.

But, who could it be?

Something like this was impossible. This was the territory of none other than the

'Secretive Plotter'. So, who would dare to invade this place, then?

Could it be one of the large Nebulas?

? ? Or… ?

I quickly went through the list of all the Constellations related to 'fire' in my head. But I couldn't come up with any Modifiers.

This incredible flame that burned away the entirety of the expansive

forest… Could it be that there was another existence possessing this much power back in the original story?

[MykingMykingMykingMykingMyking]

[EscapeEscapeEscapeEscapeEscape]

Small 'Outer Gods' quickly gathered around the Plotter. Many Outer Gods had left him by now, but still, there were quite a lot that chose to remain. They were like the citizens crowding around to protect their king, having sensed the imminent fall of their

kingdom.

The 'Secretive Plotter' looking at his subjects spoke to me. [['Demon King of Salvation'.

I too made a mistake like you once before.]]

His voice remained relaxed, even as he faced an urgent situation of his forest burning away. As if, he had predicted all of this beforehand.

[[Rather foolishly, I tried to change what had already happened in the past.]]

“…What are you suddenly on about? Are you talking about the events of the 41st turn?"

If that was the case, then I too knew what happened.

Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 41st turn made a deal with the 'Devil of the Horizon' and sent Shin Yu-Seung to the 3rd turn. As a consequence, she ended up becoming the 3rd turn's calamity.

If the 'Secretive Plotter' was thinking about that particular 'calamity', then I wanted to tell him that there was nothing to worry about.

Unfortunately, [41] next to me was shaking his head. "This isn't from my regression turn."

"What? But then…"

[41] didn't reply and simply stared at the Plotter.

My head was in a mess. According to my knowledge, the only regression turn in the

'Ways of Survival' where he interfered with the past that had already happened was the 41st.

…But now, there was another turn besides that one?

When was that? Did it happen outside the original story?

A sun enveloped in pure flames was rising up high above the wide-open ceiling of the hall. However, this sun belonged to neither Surya nor Apollo. And in the centre of this exploding sun, ominous-looking sunspots were growing larger. No Constellations that I knew possessed a Sun that horrifying.

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That was the power belonging to an existence I didn't know of.

[999th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is sighing in lamentation at the Sun.]

…999th turn??

Abruptly, I recalled something.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 999th regression turn. I respect the life you led. Excluding me, you were the only one who managed to get near the 'Conclusion'.」

One of them was what the 'Secretive Plotter' had said, and…

「"Even if I regress, this world will not vanish. Meaning, the world will

not reset just because I died."」

…And, the other one was what Yu Jung-Hyeok had said.

Even if he died, the world would not vanish. Even after he regressed, the world would still remain.

「What if it wasn't only the 'Secretive Plotter' who witnessed the Conclusion?」

「What if there was another story that didn't get a mention in the original storyline?」

「What if there was another being who, even after Yu Jung-Hyeok had died, remained in that world and continued on through the scenarios? While fighting over and over again… 」

The sun now enveloped in jet-black flames suddenly cracked like an eggshell and blinding rays of light exploded out.

「What if there was another being who reached the end of the world and witnessed his or her 'Conclusion'?」

The arsonist responsible for burning down the forest showed itself in the centre of the light. A silhouette simply too beautiful to labelled as a mere arsonist wavered about.

Another existence possessing power equalling the 'Secretive Plotter'. Such an

existence was spreading out her purest-white wings right before my eyes.

The Plotter looked up at this creature and spoke.

[[The 'Living Flame'.]]

The 'Living Flame', he said.

There was such a name among the records written by the 'Recorder of Fear'.

「The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

One of the kings that ruled over the 'Outer Gods' alongside the 'Secretive Plotter'.

The thing was, I never thought about who the other kings could be, or where they might have come from.

What a stupid moron I was.

All the 'Outer Gods' were beings from the discarded regression turns from the 'Ways of Survival'. Since that was the case, I should've figured it out that their kings would also be other beings from the 'Ways of Survival', too.

Ku-gugugugu!

It felt as if my hands were trembling like crazy.

I didn't want to imagine the cause and effect. No, I didn't want to acknowledge it. Right now, I didn't want to accept that a world as horrifying as this one could actually exist.

With his trademark disinterested voice, the Plotter addressed me. [[Now do you understand? This is the consequence of distorting the world-line.]]

As his words came to an end, a sword wrapped in the most brilliant, luminous flames began pointing in our direction.

It was the sword of an Archangel that I was intimately familiar with.

Why didn't I know it? Maybe, I didn't want to know in the first place?

That these flames could be this hot and this merciless?

That the flames meant to burn demons could also burn other beings, too?

The sword [Flames of Retribution], now completely covered in [Hellfire], was glowing brightly. The owner of the sword was smiling. And with an utterly terrifying expression that I had never witnessed before, she opened her mouth to speak.

[[I've been searching for you for a very long time, Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1863rd turn.]]

The eyes of the Archangel who judged everything now blazed in pitch-black flames.

[[Oh, the Outer God who ruined my world.]]

It was Uriel.

Fin.

That light in her eyes, that killing intent.

They were exactly the same as that of the Archangel I knew, yet they were also different.

This was Uriel's true appearance, the cold-blooded and cruel judge. She was the being that burned all the enemies caught by the [Flame of Retribution] for the sake of righteousness.

「This Uriel had reached her own 'Conclusion', and… 」

[is observing the entrance of the new 'Outer God'.]

[is deciphering whether to allow the target's Probability or not!]

「And, she came this far to kill the 'Secretive Plotter'.」

[OhOhOhOhOhOh]

[TwokingsTwokingsTwokingTwokingTwokings]

The entrance of another Outer God possessing a similar level of Status as the Secretive Plotter caused confusion to spread among the small Outer Gods.

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is greatly stunned by the entrance of the new

'Outer God'!]

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is watching this battlefield while forgetting to polish his head.]

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming on Aquarius', is opening her eyes wide!]

It seemed that Constellations were just as shocked as me.

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…But, broadcasting from this place should've been impossible?

Maybe the barrier preventing the broadcast was undone after the

forest went up in flames.

[is paying attention to the 'N'Gai's Forest'.]

The [Flames of Retribution] moved in Uriel's hands. The blade that melted the entirety of the forest flew in, but the Plotter lightly shifted his head out of the way. The weapon missed him by a hair's breadth and instead, blew away half of the hall and set it on fire.

[GahAhAhAhAhAh]

Outer Gods, shocked by the merciless destruction, screamed out loudly.

The [Flames of Retribution] moved again, this time with enough Status to blow the entire hall away. Every hair on my dumpling body rose up. Even Surya back in the original novel's 265th turn was not as powerful as this when he destroyed Earth.

Kwa-aaaaah!!

This time, a humongous meteor was descending from the tip of the [Flames of Retribution]. It contained enough power to blow away this forest and then, maybe even erase this entire dimension along the way, too.

I dragged out every ounce of power within my soul form. Unfortunately, there was no way I'd properly block such an attack without an Incarnation Body. Besides, to block an attack like that, you'd need…

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

In the end, the 'Secretive Plotter' had to step forward. Pitch-black particles shot out as he swung the [Heaven Shaking Sword] vigorously. It was the power of a Great Fable.

The dark Status spread out like a huge wall and defended against the meteor's impact.

Kwaaaa-boooom!!

Violent gusts of wind whipped about near the base of the forest, and the uprooted trees were flung up into the air. Whirlwinds made out of flames were completely

annihilating everything in the vicinity.

Witnessing a clash of this calibre was indeed an exceedingly rare opportunity. Even the battle between Hades and Poseidon back in 'Gigantomachia' wasn't this hectic.

[Large Nebulas are paying close attention to the battle between these two beings.]

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

In the centre of where the two Statuses were colliding, sparks grew fiercer and heavier.

The Plotter's [Heaven Shaking Sword] was trembling; he was being pushed back. It was all due to his Status being reduced after fighting me and Yu Jung-Hyeok.

This was the power of Uriel who witnessed the 'Conclusion'.

At this rate, both the 'Secretive Plotter' and I would disappear from the

along with the N'Gai's Forest.

[Currently, your soul temporarily belongs to the 'Secretive Plotter'.]

[Time remaining until your soul can return: 20 hours, 31 minutes, 20 seconds]

I still had over twenty hours remaining until my soul could return. Simply dragging things out wouldn't help my situation at all. Because, it didn't look as if the 'Secretive Plotter' would be able to hold out for too long.

[Exclusive skill, 'The 4th Wall', is activating!]

I needed to stay calm in moments like this. I decided to get a better understanding of this situation first.

"Look, man! Why is Uriel attacking you??"

First of all, which world-line did that 'Uriel' come from? And why was she attacking the 'Secretive Plotter'?

[999th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is staring at the 'Living Flame' with a helpless expression.]

For a moment, I felt the inside of my head blank out.

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…Could it be?

It was the regression turn that I liked the most. It was almost the perfect turn with just one blemish to its record – the regression turn that reached the Conclusion's doorstep.

Uriel began speaking again. [[Oh, I ask you, the Outer God. I hope that you haven't forgotten about the events of the 999th turn.]]

[[… I do remember.]]

[[That's good.]]

The blade of the enraged Uriel contained the Fable she had compiled so far.

[Great Fable, 'Flames of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

Her Great Fable burned fiercely. A story that I had never seen before was unfolding itself.

「"Master, we're almost there. We just have to go a little bit further, you know!"」

That was Yi Ji-Hye's voice.

Words began telling their story.

「"Jung-Hyeok-ssi, just hold on for a little longer. We're almost there!"」

999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok, having lost his left arm, right leg, and both of his eyes, was there. This Yu Jung-Hyeok only lived for the sake of his companions.

His world was dyed in darkness, but one voice entered it like a ray of light.

「[Conquering King, you must stay with us.]」

That's right. Uriel was also accompanying them in the 999th turn.

She was Yu Jung-Hyeok's comrade. For the sake of a man who risked his everything to fight, the Archangel willingly became his ally.

「[The Conclusion to this world is just around the corner.]」

I recalled that the 999th turn was something of a miracle.

Even if their luck was good, to think that he managed to almost reach the Conclusion during only his 999th turn.

But the truth was, it wasn't all due purely to 'luck'.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 999th turn made a deal with an 'Outer God'.」

The reason why I didn't go for the [Absolute Throne], and tried not to do the 'Other World Pledge' if at all possible, was because I knew how the '999th turn' had ended.

「An unknown godly being, whose name was just as mysterious. The 'Other World Pledge' made with that godly being eventually took Yu Jung-Hyeok's life.」

The original novel didn't specify who that 'Outer God' was. But it was

a creature that spent its own Probability to grant the 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok incredible power and lucky opportunities.

Chills ran down my neck.

- 'Demon King of Salvation'. I too made a mistake like you once before.

- Rather foolishly, I tried to change what had already happened in the past.

That 'Outer God' was none other than the 'Secretive Plotter'.

- Now, do you understand? This is the consequence of distorting the world-line.

He had entered the past world-line belonging to the original storyline and tried to distort the Probability. And the result of that was Uriel who witnessed the Conclusion of the 999th regression turn, showing up here.

[[I shall avenge my world-line in this place.]]

She was here to avenge her comrades' grudges against the 'Outer God' from then.

[[Just like how you stole away all that's precious to me, I shall do the same to you.]]

Her boundless and justified wrath filled her true voice. I felt all my strength abandoning

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me.

I could understand where Uriel was coming from. I too clearly remembered the moment that the 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok died.

- Author-nim. This can't be the end, can it? But, isn't Jung-Hyeok-ee

just too pitiful to end up like this?

999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok sacrificed his life to guide his comrades towards the Conclusion. But his cost was to never see the conclusion of the world himself.

It was all because of the damn 'Other World Pledge'. The Probability flooding in cut his life off before the end.

- Can't he be revived somehow? Like, the Underworld, or through reincarnation. I mean, there are lots of different ways, right? Besides, just what was that 'Outer God'

anyway…?

I resented the author, and resented that 'Outer God'. And I despaired while looking at the dying Yu Jung-Hyeok with only a little bit left until the Conclusion.

The mental shock was so strong that I even ended up hesitating whether to read the next day's chapter or not.

Now, I was curious.

Why did the 'Secretive Plotter' do something like that back in the 999th turn?

[[I wanted to change it.]]

…What?

[[I wanted to see a proper Conclusion. Even if that happened in a different worldline.]]

The Plotter once told me this – that I had to be careful with the Probability, that I needed to create the right Conclusion. But even someone saying stuff like that had actually wished to change his past.

Just like how I wished to change this regression turn, he too had felt the same way

once.

Regardless of whether the end result devoured the cause or not…

Even if the 's Probability crumbled…

…He wanted to reach the proper Conclusion at least once. He wished to see himself reaching the Conclusion together with his comrades.

However, it didn't work out that way.

[[I'm sure you find me quite pathetic. That I made the same sort of mistake as you.]]

The Plotter's Status was crumbling down. His body was getting even smaller. All Yu Jung-Hyeoks sleeping within him were now screaming. And as if to speak up for those screams…

[[I wanted to find the one responsible for creating this tragedy,]] said the Plotter. [[The one who created this universe. The one that made me regress, and made me repeat the scenarios. My goal is to kill the one beyond the 'Wall'.]]

That was his true goal.

Stopping the regressions, saving the Outer Gods, opening up the Final Wall…

All of these were centred around his main goal.

He waved his hand and my soul left the [Murim dumpling]. I got tense. I couldn't tell what he was thinking of.

I quickly spoke to him.

- The current you can't stop that Uriel. However, if my companions and I help out…

The Plotter shifted his gaze over to me. [[Do you understand what you're saying right now?]]

- I do.

I was improvising on the fly, but I did genuinely feel that way. Since I heard his true

end goal, it was time for me make my reply.

- From the get-go, the world that peeps on and greedily devours someone else's life is wrong.

The was wrong. Yu Jung-Hyeok's regressions were wrong, and the stories the scenarios created were unfair.

- That's why I won't sit still. I'll witness the Conclusion. You say I shouldn't, but I'll see it regardless. I'll definitely jump over that Wall you failed to cross along with my companions, and as for the being beyond it…

The Plotter was now waiting for me to finish my words.

-… I'll kill that guy. I'll end your 'Most Ancient Dream'.

Uriel's Status was growing even stronger.

The expansive hall began crumbling down. Like a world breaking apart, the N'Gai's Forest was disappearing.

Outer Gods moved closer to the 'Secretive Plotter', perhaps sensing that the end was nigh. Meanwhile, he opened his mouth. [[You said that you survived because of my story.]]

"…”

[[In that case, time to pay your debt.]]

Just before I could ask him for clarification, Yu Jung-Hyeok's Fables flooded out from him.

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is howling out!]

[Great Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

The Plotter's memories were now permeating into me – memories that I didn't know.

The information he gained after going through the 1863rd turn was now flooding into me.

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- You…!

A portal was generated behind me, one created by the power of an 'Outer God'. It began to gradually suck me in.

- H-hey, hang on a minute! What are you trying to…!

[[I'm not trying to leave this world's Conclusion in your hands.]]

At that moment, he no longer looked like the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[[I shall regress.]]

Right now, he was 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.

[[I shall live through the 1864th turn, and then, the 1865th. I'll survive that turn, witness the Conclusion and become the Outer God once more, and…]]

Eventually, the hall collapsed. Everything was melting away under the bright light.

Uriel's sword sliced through the thick history that totalled 1863rd regression turns, and flew towards the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[[To see the Conclusion of this world-line, I shall return.]]

His body was defencelessly pierced through. And I had to watch that, unable to do anything. He was cut down by the [Flames of Retribution] and his Fable was scattering away.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is activating Stigma, 'Regression Lv.??'!]

Even though he had become the 'Outer God', he was still a regressor.

The one thing he hadn't done in a long time, regressing, would start again. He'd wake up in the 1864th turn's subway once more, and go on to create yet another horrifying world-line.

「Kim Dok-Ja thought to himself. 'I can't let that be.'」

Before I could unleash the Fables permeating in my soul form, though, Uriel made her move first.

[[You shall not escape to the next turn.]]

Her white hands grabbed the Plotter's neck. Black light pouring out from her hand stopped the Fable's disintegration. The light spread out gradually and encased his entire body. Soon, the light formed a shape of small sphere.

I recognised what that was.

That was the [Sealing Sphere] used back in the 1863rd turn to seal away the

'Apocalypse Dragon'.

Why didn't I think of it before? Uriel was now an Outer God, too. So she should obviously be aware of the Plotter's, or Yu Jung-Hyeok's, ability by now. She should know that he'd continue regressing and would never truly die.

Her hand tightened further and further. The jet-black Sealing Sphere soon emitted pale light.

[[I shall seal you away for eternity.]]

Fin.

The sealing technique that utilised the [Sealing Sphere of the Apocalypse Dragon].

This was a similar plan to what the 1863rd turn's Han Su-Yeong had devised.

「"It'll stop the time of this place, and Earth will be sealed along with the Apocalypse Dragon. Frozen forever in the 95th scenario."」

「"And that is the way you can kill Yu Jung-Hyeok."」

It was the method of sealing Yu Jung-Hyeok inside the perpetuity of time and stopping his regressions.

I reflexively looked at the 'Secretive Plotter'. I wanted to tell him that now would be a good time to run. Even if it was him, he'd not be able to escape from being sealed in that thing.

However, why are you… smiling?

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at his own ■■.]

He was strong enough to survive 1863 lifetimes. But because of that, he was also exhausted enough to crumble at any given moment.

The eternal slumber. In a certain way, that was what he had been

wishing for his entire life.

- H-hang on!! Uriel! Please stop!

My words prompted Uriel to look in my direction for the first time.

She seemed to be surprised by the fact that an insignificant being had called out her true name, and opened her mouth to speak.

[[Who is this soul form? Is it an existence from this world-line?]]

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I wasn't sure what to say here.

Before I could, though, the 'Secretive Plotter' seized the initiative first. [[He's a nobody.

Let him go.]]

For a moment there, he was looking straight at me. Quite unlike his usual self, his eyes were displaying clear emotions.

He genuinely wished for me to make my escape from here.

However, the situation remained grim – the portal was being shut forcibly by Uriel.

She alternated her gaze filled with the 'Secretive Plotter' and me, her eyes remaining unreadable, before opening her mouth again.

[[Even after you ruined your own turn and messed up someone else's world-line, you still have something you wish to protect?]]

Her power extended out in an instant and captured me. This might be the worst possible situation.

[[Very well. I shall seal this bastard away with you. Enjoy your eternal slumber alongside your comrade, then.]]

- H-hang on a minute! Shouldn't you be listening to my side of the story, too?!

Uriel glared at me as if I was speaking of nonsense.

I didn't back down and shouted back.

- I do understand where you are coming from. I know how wronged you feel after your world-line got distorted, and I get how angry you are. However, this is wrong. This isn't your world-line. What you're trying to do is exactly the same as the one you hate, the 'Secretive Plotter'!

As I urgently made my case, I began sensing this stinging pain on my forehead. My head with no actual physical form was hurting right now. The sensation from the constrictive headband was getting stronger.

- Why don't we stop this? I mean, it's already not enough to pool our strengths together

to destroy the , so why should we fight each other like this? Don't you know who the real enemy is? Don't you know where the true cause of all this tragedy…

[[You want to destroy the ? Why do you wish to do something like that?]]

Now that was an unexpected question.

- That's because, the world of the is…

[[If the disappears, the whole universe will fall into chaos.]]

At that moment, a corner of my chest grew icy cold.

I secretly believed that all my companions wished to witness the same

Conclusion as each other. However… what if that wasn't the case?

After Yu Jung-Hyeok's death, the 999th turn's companions would have carried on to reach the Final Scenario, and cleared it.

What was the end of the world they had reached after all of that?

[[Such a world-line must never be created. That is the way of Evil.]]

Along with her declaration, her Status began to tighten around me.

-… In that case, it can't be helped. We can only fight, then.

[[Fight? A creature without an Incarnation Body will…?]]

- I'm not the one who'll fight you.

I looked up at the sky and smirked back at her.

- My comrades will.

Powerful sparks exploded in front of my eyes. My head got squeezed tightly as if it'd shatter into pieces, and my vision fell apart. Something was getting closer.

「Prajna… DokJa… Don't-try… stay-put-sutra… 」

…Here they come.

[Ba-aaht!]

Accompanied by Biyu's cry, a new portal opened up in the mid-air. Almost right away, the Black Flame Dragon's pitch-black Breath poured out. Uriel quickly discarded me and retreated away from that powerful rush of hot flames.

At the same time, someone snatched away my soul form and flew up.

"Every-freaking-where you go, seriously man… And why do you look like this now?"

It was Han Su-Yeong.

"I guess only the constrictive headband wasn't enough."

And then, Yu Sang-Ah.

She was carrying my Incarnation Body on her back, currently shackled by the headband. She seemed to have correctly guessed what my current condition was.

[Currently, the binding force of the 'Existence Pledge' is in a weakened state.]

I didn't hesitate and jumped back into my body. My vision crumbled again for a bit, and the sensations from my limbs returned. Although my Incarnation Body was not okay, it was still better than not having one.

I saw Uriel activating [Hellfire] through my blurry vision.

Han Su-Yeong next to me had her eyes open up wide. "H-hey, what the heck is this…?!"

"No time to explain. We've got to get out of here, pronto."

Both Han Su-Yeong and 'Sakyamuni's Successor', Yu Sang-Ah, were powerful beings.

Unfortunately, our enemy this time was simply too strong. With only these two…

Kwa-aaaaaaah!!

As if waiting for that moment, [Hellfire]'s flames pounced on my companions.

"Goddammit!!"

The waves of incredible heat that couldn't be avoided no matter where you escaped to

– its Status was so humongous that Han Su-Yeong's [Black Flame] alone wasn't enough to fight back. It was then, a powerful burst of reddish flames exploded from the same portal Han Su-Yeong had used. It had the exact same colouring as our enemy's flames.

Two powerful sources of heat clashed and generated a violent storm of fire.

[What the ■ck? Which mother■cker is it?!]

A certain someone coughed her lungs out and appeared from thick, choking flames.

An Archangel waved away the smoke with one hand and revealed herself.

Wearing a black dress and kitted out in a golden anklet, an Archangel I was intimately familiar with was standing there, soot on her cheeks and all.

[Ng?? Which son of a bi■ dares to hurt my Kim Dok…]

Uriel shifted her gaze beyond the [Hellfire] and soon afterwards, her expression became dazed. Then her jaw slackened as she muttered out. [I… am the bi■?]

…I didn't expect her to be a part of the rescue team. The situation had gotten more complicated this way. Of all things, the two Uriels had to run into each other here.

[[… And you are?]]

It seemed that the Outer God Uriel was just as stunned by this.

[[I see. You are this world-line's…]]

The moment these two Uriels looked at each other, violent sparks exploded in the air.

It was rather obvious that our side was still in an overwhelmingly

disadvantageous position. Our Uriel was strong, sure, but that Uriel was someone who had witnessed the end of a world-line.

If we don't find an opening quickly and escape, then…

Tsu-chuchuchut!!

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An unexpected event happened next.

[is intrigued by the encounter of these two beings.]

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

When two Fables met and intertwined with each other in the air, a gigantic backflow of memories occurred.

「[Get up, Yu Jung-Hyeok! Hurry!]」

Memories from the 999th regression turn were coming through.

Uriel's eyes opened wider at this sudden intrusion of foreign memories. [W-what's this? What's going on?]

Waves of unfamiliar memories were flooding us. Uriel from the 999th turn was fighting with her back pressed against Yu Jung-Hyeok's. Now that was a fine display of what being comrade-in-arms looked like.

Our Uriel couldn't get a hold of herself from the rush of memories flooding in and staggered unsteadily.

That damn theory, again it's… Before I could complete my train of thought, though, I realised that the situation wasn't as bad as I expected. Because, the exchange of Fables via that theory went both ways. The evidence of that was the 999th turn's Uriel, who not only staggered about, but she actually even plopped down on the ground.

「[Kim Dok-Ja! Over here! Sit next to me!]」

Definitely.

「9158FOREVER」

「[One's ID shouldn't be too eye-catching, so… Right. Let me go with uri9158… Alright, it's not so obvious now.]」

「[… 'Squid Kim Dok-Ja's Leg' will be given away as a s-special bonus??]」

And there were a few Fables that might shock their viewers mixed in among them, too.

[[T-this, this, what is…??]]

999th turn's Uriel was frowning deeply as if she was in pain. Han Su-Yeong didn't miss that opening and, while supporting our Uriel, shouted out. "I don't know what's going on here, but this is good. Let's bounce outta here. I mean, she looks seriously strong even at a glance, right?"

Her judgement was definitely correct. However, she forgot one small detail.

"Hang on. Let's take him with us, too."

I pointed at the 'Secretive Plotter' sagging on the ground.

Perhaps the memories of this world-line proved to be too shocking for her, the sealing sphere Uriel had been constructing had become quite badly tattered.

Han Su-Yeong spoke in pure disbelief. "Are you stupid? Why should we take him with us?!"

"We need to bring him with us. Only then will we reach the correct 'Conclusion'."

"What bullshit are you…”

Indeed, it was a bullshit-like utterance. I was being obstinate, and my actions didn't make much sense. Even then, I continued to speak my piece. "That guy must not die here. He too has the right to see the Conclusion."

「All the worlds were simply blaming 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.」

Uriel from the 999th turn, everyone from that world-line, too – as the consequence of spending his entire life to reach his own 'Conclusion', he had to become the enemy of every world-line.

「Out of the 1863 regression turns, was there any turn where he got to be happy, at least once?」

When I regained my wits, I was already sprinting forward.

999th turn Uriel was slowly regaining her own wits too, and I saw her trying to reignite the [Hellfire].

Han Su-Yeong shouted out. "You crazy fool!! We don't have the time!!"

I gave it my all to activate the [Way of the Wind]. Flames from [Hellfire] began flooding in once more. These dancing flames in the air somehow looked like ancient letters to me.

-… Author-nim. Wouldn't it be okay, just one time?

I couldn't quite remember how old this memory was.

- I mean, there are so many regression turns, so, just once wouldn't…

…Did I really say something like that? My memories weren't clear enough. However, just like back then, when all I could do was to type on the keyboard and press the space bar, I could only run forward like crazy right in this moment.

- Isn't it okay for him to be happy?

Maybe, that was me whining to a god responsible for creating this world.

- It seems that you weren't happy with what I have written.

Then, the 'god' replied.

- In that case, what kind of a conclusion would you like to see, Dok-Ja-nim? Which conclusion would be a happy ending for the protagonist?

What did I say back then? I tried, but couldn't remember at all. And even now, I couldn't be sure of what the right answer was. I didn't have the right to speak about someone else's happiness, after all.

However, even if it was someone like me who had no right, there was this one thing I still understood.

「This is not a happy ending.」

The Secretive Plotter's body was getting sucked into the encroaching heat from the

[Hellfire]. With no time to spare, I managed to grab hold of his wrist, and then, began running in the opposite direction.

Han Su-Yeong's complexion grew pale and she hurriedly summoned the [X-grade Ferrarghini]. Meanwhile, Yu Sang-Ah shouted out. "Dok-Ja-ssi! Faster!"

[[You can't!]]

I evaded the rushing flames and placed the Secretive Plotter on my back. The bottom of my feet was growing insanely hot now. I ran with all my might to escape from that crazy heat.

"Argh, screw this shit… I don't care anymore! Hurry up and get in!"

Han Su-Yeong reached out to me, and I barely managed to jump inside the vehicle. I saw Uriel in the backseat, shivering away. Almost at the same time, a tsunami wave of reddish flames pounced on us.

[[Stop!!]]

I inwardly prayed towards the 'Mass Production-type Maker'. I prayed that this vehicle's performance wasn't 'mass-production' in the slightest.

[Constellation, 'Mass Production-type Maker', is grinning brightly.]

With an explosive turn of speed, the [X-grade Ferrarghini] accelerated forward. At the same time, Biyu opened a portal, and we jumped into this dimensional passageway right away.

The horrifying howl made by 999th turn's Uriel chased us from behind. I was scared that she was actually chasing us down. Even if we managed to escape back to Earth unscathed like this, if that Uriel managed to follow us and went on a rampage…

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The 999th turn's Uriel stopped giving chase as the sparks crazily whipped about.

While shooting me a terrifying glare, no less.

[is carefully observing the 'Living Flame'.]

It seemed that she couldn't use this portal. A powerful storm of Probability's aftermath was holding her back. But that made sense. A being possessing such a might actually enjoyed less freedom in the , after all.

However, there was this one thing that kept nagging me. If she was that restrained, how could she appear in the 'N'Gai's Forest' with such good timing?

It was as if someone had instigated this whole thing.

…Instigating it?

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoju', is keeping a close eye on your whereabouts.]

At that moment, a faint little theory entered my head. What if that Uriel's appearance was not a coincidence?

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoche', is keeping a close eye on your whereabouts.]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Baram', is keeping a close eye on your whereabouts.]

What if someone within the wanted it to happen, and they summoned her to this world-line?

There was almost no organisation in this world capable of moving that much Probability.

[, is keeping a close eye on your whereabouts.]

The N'Gai's Forest could be seen through the vehicle's windows. 'Outer Gods' that came from the doomed world-lines were now being extinguished.

Citizens of a small kingdom were saying their goodbyes to their king.

[SurviveSurviveSurviveSurviveSurvive]

There was more than one Outer God king.

Just like how the 999th turn's Uriel had shown up here, other Kings would undoubtedly appear, too. Surely, the ones trying to interfere with the Conclusion I wanted to see would call them to this world.

[is looking at you.]

I raised my head to find the world that I need to fight looking at me.

This would be a very tough and arduous fight.

Han Su-Yeong looked at me through the rearview mirror and grumbled about something. Yu Sang-Ah sitting in the front passenger's seat was looking at me. I quietly nodded my head and gazed at the unconscious 'Secretive Plotter' and the still-dazed Uriel.

Quite likely, no one in this universe would stand on our side.

I saw the portal's exit in the distance.

[Your choice has left a profound impact on the ■■.]

[Your ■■ is leaning towards 「eternity」.]

And so, the time to prepare for the final pages of the world had arrived.

Fin.

While driving down the dimensional passageway, neither Han Su-Yeong nor Yu Sang-Ah said much. Thanks to that, though, I was able

to organise my thoughts while gazing outside the window – on what I need to do in the future, and the things I'd like to do.

Next to me, Uriel finally stopped muttering something with a serious face only to fall into a snore-filled slumber. Meanwhile, the 'Secretive Plotter' was half-leaning against her, also unconscious.

It kind of felt weird seeing two of the oldest viewers in my channel sleeping so defencelessly like that.

Han Su-Yeong, checking me out through the rearview mirror, suddenly spoke up.

"What are you grinning like that for? You should be getting ready to give us a proper explanation once we get back."

Explanation, was it? It was pretty clear what I needed to explain to them, of course.

"You only have one chance."

I found Yu Sang-Ah's bright smile rather terrifying.

"We've arrived."

Not too long after that, the Ferrarghini came to a stop.

We were back in Seoul.

*

A short while later, I was sitting in front of my companions.

The faces that I missed so much, the ones I wanted to see had gathered in one place.

The that experienced the scenarios together with me, including

Yi Gil-Yeong, Shin Yu-Seung, Jeong Hui-Won, and Yi Ji-Hye. And, Yi Seol-Hwa and Gong Pil-Du who guarded Seoul while I wasn't here. Finally, I could see my mother and the wanderers in the living room a bit further away.

I studied the faces of all my companions and lowered my head 90 degrees before opening my mouth. "I'm sorry."

"About what?"

"All the things I've done… I'm really sorry."

"H-mm… Well, sure."

…What's this? Weren't they furious at me?

I wasn't sure what's going on here, but well, I thought this was for the best. I had so many things to explain, after all.

"I'd like to explain a few things, starting from…"

"First of all, tell us whose child that is."

Gong Pil-Du threw out that question first. I chased after his gaze and saw the 'Secretive Plotter' floating inside a clear sphere near me.

[Currently, this individual's Fable is unstable.]

Seeing that he still failed to regain his consciousness yet, it seemed that a serious problem had occurred after he used up far too much Probability. Meaning, it was impossible for him to clarify the situation by himself.

Meanwhile, rage began filling up Gong Pil-Du's eyes when I didn't answer back. "You said that you'd get rid of the scenarios so I protected Seoul for you, yet you dare to show yourself here with your child instead?!"

The grief of a man who spent his entire life as a 'Gireogi' dad could be felt in that voice.

"I see that you're under some sort of a misunderstanding, but…"

"Whose is it?" Gong Pil-Du glanced at Yu Sang-Ah with somewhat fearful eyes. "…

Could it be?" He met her smiling eyes and shook his head. "… Right, there's no way.

That means, it's with her, then?"

"You want to die?!"

Han Su-Yeong growled angrily, prompting him to flinch grandly.

I didn't miss that opening and quickly jumped in. "Excuse me, isn't it a bit too much thinking that he's someone's kid? Besides, just where does he look like a newborn to you??"

"Han Myeong-Oh's kid grew up in the blink of an eye, didn't she?"

Those words caused Han Myeong-Oh's complexion to pale. "That kind of makes me uncomfortable."

"What bugs me more than that is the kid's face. It's exactly the same as that jerk-off's."

Gong Pil-Du shifted his gaze over to the corner of the living room while saying that.

That's where the cross-legged Yu Jung-Hyeok and his glaring eyes were at, his entire body tightly wrapped in bandages. His trademark scary glare was locked on me.

- Kim Dok-Ja, what is the meaning of this?

I could only sigh grandly. "It's only natural that he looks exactly the same as that 'jerk-off'. Because, this kid is that jerk-off, you see."

Silence descended on the living room in an instant. Gong Pil-Du was looking at me, his eyes asking what kind of rubbish I was spewing out this time.

It seemed that my tale was going to get a bit lengthier than initially planned.

"There are several Yu Jung-Hyeoks in this world… I guess I should start my explanation from there."

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I started my in-depth explanation from the end of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

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From when I summoned the Outer God that destroyed the Demon World, the

'Nameless Mist', to stop the Apocalypse Dragon. (Gong Pil-Du: "Are you bloody insane?")

And then, encountering the 'Secretive Plotter' and him kidnapping me. (Yi Seol-Hwa:

"Oh my goodness.")

Then, finding out that the Plotter was none other than Yu Jung-Hyeok who had lived through 1863 regression turns. (Jang Ha-Yeong: "… What the heck are you talking about?")

Forming a contract with him that also contained the 'Other World Pledge'. (Shin Yu-Seung: "… I knew something like that would happen, ahjussi.") Entering the Great Fable「Journey to the West」without informing my companions.

(Yi Ji-Hye: "Ahjussi, you're definitely not cut out to be an actor, you know.") The battle between two Yu Jung-Hyeoks, one from 1863rd turn and the other, from 999th turn. (Jeong Hui-Won: "Just how many Yu Jung-Hyeoks are out there??") Yu Jung-Hyeok of this world-line, who thought that he was in the 3rd turn, realising that it's actually the 1864th. (Han Myeong-Oh: "Could it be that you yourself can't explain this and are just coming up with random stuff??") Barely managing to clear the「Journey to the West」with my companions' help, but then, getting kidnapped by the Secretive Plotter again. (Yu Sang-Ah,

wordlessly sighing.)

And finally, the event of encountering the 999th turn's Uriel in that place, who had become an Outer God herself.

When I got that far, even I began wondering what the hell I was talking about. I raised my head to discover that my companions were carrying roughly the similar expressions.

The first one to react was Han Myeong-Oh. "Hmm, hmm. So that's what happened. I think I understand everything."

…But, that's plainly not possible?

Everyone was now looking at him. So, Han Myeong-Oh added one more thing. "It

seems to me that you actually enjoy dying or getting kidnapped."

"…Excuse me, I guess it's not just me who don't get it, right? Just what the heck are you talking about here? There are three of my Masters running around out there? And what's up with this 1864th turn and all…?"

Perhaps it was natural that they didn't understand.

From the get-go, the fact that the 1863rd turn had split into two was causing the complications.

Yu Jung-Hyeok who lived through the original 1863rd turn went on to become the

'Secretive Plotter'. Meanwhile, Yu Jung-Hyeok that lived through the altered 1863rd turn regressed once more and became the dude that we all knew.

Since I read the 'Ways of Survival', I could understand it fine, but it

was natural that my companions would find this all rather mystifying.

Jeong Hui-Won, massaging her head, asked me then. "Okay, so what are you saying? Is our Jung-Hyeok-ssi the 3rd turn, or the 1864th?"

That prompted Yu Jung-Hyeok sitting on the corner of the bed to reply curtly. "I don't know."

"Eh?"

"I can't remember."

I activated the [Character List] and confirmed Yu Jung-Hyeok's information.

+

Character: Yu Jung-Hyeok

Exclusive Attribute: Regressor <3rd turn> (Myth)…

+

Surprisingly, his attribute had reverted back to '3rd turn'.

"My memories returned only during the time when I was borrowing Kim Dok-Ja's Fable for a little while. It was similar to watching someone else's history."

…I had no idea it was like that.

Yu Jung-Hyeok continued on. "This is what I think. This is originally the 3rd turn, and I am definitely the 3rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok. Except that, during a certain point during the world-line, the memories from when I was living in the 1864th turn have covered up mine temporarily."

Yi Seol-Hwa, listening in, joined the conversation. "… But, that doesn't make any sense.

You're saying that the 3rd turn has influenced the 1863rd turn, and in turn, the 1863rd has influenced the 3rd… That's logically impossible."

"Logically, no." Eventually, Han Su-Yeong stepped in, too. "It can only be valid in the form of written words. What I'm saying is that, such a thing is only possible because this world used to be a 'novel' originally."

She then shifted her gaze over to the 'Secretive Plotter' surrounded by the transparent sphere. "It's the same thing as the 'square circle' or the 'triangle with the total of their interior angles coming at 720 degrees'."

Yi Seol-Hwa tilted her head and asked her. "But, something like that can't exist, right?"

"It's more correct to say that you can't even imagine it, actually. However, as texts, as paragraphs, they certainly can exist. What's happening right now is just like that. To us, it might be a time paradox, but as texts of a novel, it's completely possible, you know. I mean, you can just say, there it is, so deal with it. It's not the issue with understanding it, but rather, accepting it. So, let's look at it in a simpler way. We're currently stuck inside a crap novel. Since the original was crap, this is the end result."

I wanted to say something as a rebuttal, but since she spoke of truth, I couldn't think of anything.

"If I was this novel's writer, I'd have stopped doing the world-line distortion thing at once or twice. Readers seriously don't like this sort of complicated stories, you know?

Even the Constellations probably can't figure out what's going on here."

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says that his Incarnation is truly a smart cookie.]

"A world with broken Probability will collapse by itself. I know of quite a few stories that ended in that manner. Worlds that even their authors gave up on."

Han Su-Yeong was an author herself so she could say these words. She might have abandoned such worlds in the past, and she might be regretting it 'till this day.

When I thought about that, something felt off to me.

The world created by the author of the 'Ways of Survival', tls123, had become a reality.

- In that case, what kind of a conclusion would you like to see, Dok-Ja-nim? Which conclusion would be a happy ending for the protagonist?

Could it be that the author couldn't finish his story and was leaving it up to us?

Jeong Hui-Won scratched her cheek and asked. "Okay, so what's your conclusion, Han Su-Yeong?"

"We gotta fight those bastards that shoved us into this stupid world. Whether it's the author, the Outer Gods, or even the Dokkaebis."

"The same as it has always been, then."

"Doesn't matter what happened in the original, you can chuck that crap to the dogs for all I care. We have to see our own Conclusion, anyway. We simply can't remain stuck in the damn shithole scenarios forever."

She was right. Right about everything.

Whether it was the Outer God King or the , it didn't matter.

[Every star in Nebula is radiating light.]

No matter who our enemy was, we still had only one choice to make. We fight, win, and reach our answers in our own way.

"Dok-Ja-ssi?"

Before I realised it, my companions were looking at me. They seemed to be waiting for me to say something.

Their expressions were asking me about what we need to do moving on, and what we need to make preparations for. Of course, I had been thinking about those, as well.

However, it wasn't that easy for me to say the first words.

Maybe it was because I felt nervous, knowing that the end was around the corner. It was fear that, although we reached this far with so much hardship, one wrong judgement from me and everything could go down the crapper, just like that. It was also a burden of knowing that I now had to walk on the path not seen in the 'original novel'.

My lips bobbed up and down several times, and eventually, I managed to eke out a word. "So…"

"That'll be enough for today." Yu Sang-Ah stepped in to stop me. "Let us rest for today, and carry on tomorrow. Everyone, we've returned from a tough scenario only just now, anyway."

*

I stayed up that night and made plans.

I was almost lured by the temptation to read the 'final revised' version of the 'Ways of Survival' several times, but in the end, I didn't. I wasn't sure why not, but then again I did have this hunch.

This gut feeling that, the moment I read the novel, I'd not be able to escape from its shackles.

"…"

I fell into a slumber so deep that I couldn't even remember when I succumbed to it.

The last bits of the memories were a blur. I might have dozed off while reading a book, and I thought I drank a cup of warm tea that Yi Gil-Yeong had brought in. In any case, it was a rather sweet sleep.

And, I thought I had a happy dream, too.

The dream was about the chat I had with Yu Sang-Ah some time ago. Set in a world where all the scenarios had come to an end, my companions were busy talking about their daily lives. It was really peaceful. It was so peaceful, in fact, that it didn't feel like real 'peace' to me. And when I saw the bright smiles on Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong's faces, somewhat mysteriously I realised the truth.

「This is a dream, isn't it.」

I bit down hard on my lip, and as if an earthquake had erupted out, the view of my dream rocked about. Still in the haziness of my consciousness, I slowly opened my eyes and tried to sit up.

…What's this?

My body didn't want to move.

Also, the faint earthquake I felt inside the dream continued on, too.

I managed to force my eyes open, and the surroundings revealed itself under the dim darkness. What greeted me was the sensation of plush leather enveloping my back and the head.

"Hey, Kim Dok-Ja's trying to wake up."

"Put him to sleep again."

I felt someone smacking me in the head, and my consciousness dimmed again. And as I faded out, I heard a mischievous voice talking to me.

"This is the workers' revolt, you dumbass."

And when I opened my eyes again…

I was inside an unfamiliar mountainside.

Fin.

I began thinking about how this event came to be.

One, I was bound tightly.

Two, I was thrown inside an unfamiliar mountainside.

No matter how hard I analysed it, the end result always came back to 'kidnapping', but who would dare to infiltrate the and kidnap me? Which could only mean…

“…is…”

“…Dok-Ja… Untie…?"

"Aht?…”

Faint voices could be heard coming from somewhere.

I grunted and struggled to free myself, and then, staggered towards where those voices were coming from. I brushed past the thickets and around 30 seconds later, ran into a fairly wide campsite manned by my companions.

"Ah, so he came on his own volition, then." Han Su-Yeong snickered and waved her hand towards me. "What are you looking at? Haven't you seen an industrial strike action before?"

"Hang on a minute, this…"

"What a nice breeze. Dok-Ja-ssi, why don't you come and lie down here?"

Jeong Hui-Won was lying spread-eagled on the ground looking up at the sky right next to Han Su-Yeong. She moved her arms as if they were her wings, causing the fragrant green blades of grass to fall and get back up again and again.

Han Su-Yeong then began muttering in a reverential voice. "Grass lies down. Faster than wind, it lies down."

"Ohh."

"Jeong Hui-Won too lies down. Faster than wind she lies down and before the gust comes she stands up first."

"Not bad?"

While looking at this sudden breakout of a poetry reading competition, as well as Jeong Hui-Won providing timely support fire, I asked them in a dazed voice.

"Just what is going on…?"

"This is the workers' revolution, dumbass."

"Okay, you've been harping on about a revolution and whatnot for a while now, but…"

"Argh, I just want to take a damn break. Do I need to spell it out for you??"

I frowned after she berated me.

Taking a break?

"What are you talking about? Don't you know what era we're in right now?"

"What era are we in, then?"

I wasn't sure what to say when she retorted back like that. What did she mean by

'what' era we were in?

[Currently, the Nebula possesses the qualification to enter the Final Scenario.]

[Remaining time to enter the scenario is: 28 days, 12 hours, 15 minutes and 7

seconds.]

I calmly replied to ensure that I wouldn't get sucked into her pace. "We don't have the time for this. The Final Scenario is literally just around the corner."

"And that's why we need to take a breather now. If not, when can we be able to, like this?" said Han Su-Yeong, while sighing out grandly. "Look around you. Don't spend your day buried in your smartphone, alright? You still wanna work even after coming to a place like this?"

After hearing her, I began scanning the surrounding terrain for the first time.

Indeed, we were in a fertile, green forest. I wasn't sure which mountain it was – Jirisan, Seoraksan, or Hallasan… In any case, it was a really beautiful mountain, alright. The sunlight wasn't too strong,

while the wind blowing felt cool to the skin. It was perfect weather for camping, in other words.

I hesitated somewhat before speaking up. "Uhm, I'm not saying that we shouldn't take a break, but… Uh, it's good to rest, but what I'm saying is that we should finish what we need to do first. Right now, we're…"

"Holy cow. Dok-Ja-ssi, you're really 'kkondae' minded, aren't you? Is every company representative out there like you?" Said Jeong Hui-Won, while lightly tapping my shin.

"Representative-nim? When you're taking a break, you're supposed to just do it."

My head became complicated.

Han Su-Yeong glared at me when I didn't say a thing and addressed me in a sour tone of voice. "Sure, you're oh-so-right. Everyone shouldn't be resting at the same time, so at least one person should be in a scenario. Why don't you go ahead?"

"What?"

"I'm saying, why don't you do the scenario that you love so much?"

After hearing her, my gaze abruptly shifted up to the air to discover an actual scenario window floating up there.

[Sub Scenario – 'Workers' Off-day' has been generated!]

I had never even heard of such a scenario before so I quickly accessed the scenario window.

+

Type: Sub

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: You're the head representative of the Nebula .

Due to your exploitation and harsh treatment, employees of

are currently in a very fatigued state. They are greatly dissatisfied with you, the head of the Nebula, and are in the middle of a strike. As their boss, you must listen to their complaints and appease them. In consideration of your weak communication skill, the total goal for complaint resolution will be set at 5 people.

Time Limit: 12 hours

Reward: Trust from 's employees Failure: Death (?)

+

Death?! What the hell, what kind of a scenario is this…?

I looked up at the sky, and Biyu went "Ba-aht" up there.

Han Su-Yeong grumbled directly aimed at me. "Seriously, man. This guy needs to be told through a scenario just to understand it."

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While feeling anxious, I looked around my surroundings.

My companions seemed to be enjoying themselves. Han Su-Yeong was busy reciting parody poems, while Jeong Hui-Won had fallen asleep among the grass. Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung were butting heads and growling at each other.

"Hey, Shin Yu-Seung. Let's make a bet. Let's see who can catch the bigger dinner today."

"What are we betting on?"

"The loser grants the winner one wish, okay?"

"Call."

The kids quickly sprinted towards the forest and Yu Sang-Ah called out to them. "Be careful."

There was a small valley with a flowing stream next to the campsite; Gong Pil-Du sat on the fishing chair he brought along, and while looking at his lure in the water, he yawned out relaxedly. Han Myeong-Oh sitting next to him was muttering about this and that.

"If only we were out by the ocean, I'd have caught a seabream this big…"

I heard the refreshing sounds of water flowing in the valley as well as mountain birds chirping away. It felt as if the calming greenery of the overgrown mountainside was slowly collapsing on myself.

It was as if I was still dreaming.

This sort of affectionate behaviour felt uncomfortable to me, like some kind of ill-fitting clothes. Was it okay to be like this? Was it okay to experience moments like this already?

I searched for Yu Jung-Hyeok.

Indeed, we shouldn't be like this. If it was him, he should agree with me. He must be standing around somewhere while glaring at the group. Along with that scary light in his eyes, he'd start lecturing everyone, beginning with "You fools…!"

I quickly located him.

I was about to raise my hand and call out to him, but then, stopped after realising something was off there, too.

Chi-eeeik.

He was actually cooking over there. Standing before a large grille, his hands were moving around in a showy fashion to grill some meat. Vegetables were sizzling and shuddering inside the frying pan. The [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] capable of

destroying the heavens was now used to chop vegetables and meat.

I even forgot to call out to him and stared at that spectacle in a pure daze.

…Just what in freaking hell was going on here?

In the next second, his eyes shifted over in my direction. He then silently conveyed his words with that trademark scary glare of his. I didn't need to resort to the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] to tell what those eyes were saying – it was most definitely…

「You can look all day long, but you aren't getting any of this food.」

…That's what those eyes probably meant to say.

His sides were occupied by both Yu Mi-Ah and Yi Ji-Hye, their eyes filled with deep interest and anticipation.

"Now."

Yu Mi-Ah opened her mouth, and Yu Jung-Hyeok moved his chopsticks with an emotionless face. He was like a mother bird, picking up a piece of meat to place it in her mouth. She grinned brightly.

"It's really tasty."

Yi Ji-Hye blankly standing around opened her mouth, too. He studied her for a moment or two, before placing more meat inside Yu Mi-Ah's mouth, instead. That carried on for four, maybe five more times, and eventually, Yi Ji-Hye shut her mouth.

"Master, you're too heartless."

Unable to endure it any longer, she personally moved her chopsticks. However, his frying pan shifted according to the eye-catching trajectory of the [Red Phoenix Shunpo] to avoid her hands. She grew tearful first before getting rather stubborn about it.

"Oh, so you wanna have a go, is that it??"

I seriously couldn't tell whether I was inside the world of the 'Ways of Survival', or the

「Ice-cold Handsome Regressor Yu Jung-Hyeok Shouldn't be Doing This」 world.

He continued evading Yi Ji-Hye's chopsticks and fed his little sister Yu Mi-Ah without twitching his eyebrows once, remaining utterly expressionless. However, there was something I could glean from that.

And I came to a realisation, He was genuinely serious about being here.

「Even though we are in this sort of time frame, why did Yu Jung-Hyeok let this event happen?」

I wasn't the only head representative of . In more ways that one, Yu Jung-Hyeok was a far more obstinate person than I was, and also, boasted far greater experience in running a group such as this one.

Yet, such a person had willingly participated in this camping trip.

「Y ou re ally ca n't t ell, Kim Dok Ja?」

Accompanying [The 4th Wall]'s voice, several paragraphs unfolded themselves before my eyes.

「Author-nim, how about going to a beach during this regression turn?」

That was a comment I posted a long time ago.

Even though I remembered so much about the 'Ways of Survival', I had forgotten all about the comments I posted. Now that I thought about it, there was one event that Yu Jung-Hyeok never missed during

his countless repeated regressions.

「"Today, we take a break."」

That would be taking an off-day.

It happened during the original 'Ways of Survival', but hadn't happened so far in this world.

Every time they were about to encounter another important hurdle, he'd take his companions to a different planet's tourist attractions. Of course, he had the pretext of finding necessary items for the upcoming scenarios, but he didn't force his group to do the same things as him.

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「"Master, come join us and have some fun!"」

「"Hey, Yi Ji-Hye. Kekeke. Take a gander at my abs, will ya. Even my Black Flame Dragon praised m…"」

「"We're going to eat Jung-Hyeok-ssi's cooking today, right?"」

Even Yu Jung-Hyeok was like that, yet what was I like?

「… We must get ready for the next scenario.」

We were always in a hurry as if we were being pursued. We never had any leeway. And as we got to the latter half of the scenarios, such tendency grew even stronger. Our goal was 'always' right in front of our eyes. I acted as if the scenario themselves would break down if we didn't solve whatever it was in time. But now that I began thinking deeply about it, the scenarios would've been just fine even if we didn't hurry up and do something about them.

"H-hey, Yi Gil-Yeong!! We agreed not to use any skills here, didn't we?!"

"When did I?! You gotta give it your best always!"

I heard the kids' voices as they were returning with hunted prey.

Soon after that, I heard Han Su-Yeong's loud call that reverberated throughout the valley. "Alright, then. The treasure hunt event will now begin! The prize is a Star Relic from the Black Flame Dragon!"

"Whaa, really? From that Black Flame Dragon?"

"I've hidden it somewhere in the valley, so the first one to find it is the winner! Ah, right. You're forbidden from using your skills. Got that? Besides that, there are other prizes too, so…"

"That Star Relic is mine!"

Han Myeong-Oh quickly discarded his fishing rod and jumped inside the stream, but a little while later, Jeong Hui-Won grabbed hold of his head and threw him out of the water. In no time at all, Yi Ji-Hye and the kids returning from their hunting trip all

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jumped into the valley's water, too.

"Yo, hold up, Ji-Hye noona!! That's [Ghost Fleet]! You think I won't notice it just because they are tiny now??"

"Yi Gil-Yeong! Are you seriously taming water bugs? You cheater!?"

"Both of you, disqualified!"

How long had it been since all of my companions were smiling together like this?

Maybe, this could be our first time. They were able to smile even though the scenarios hadn't ended yet. They were able to chat away in happiness like that, and share their stories.

「And while looking at that spectacle, Kim Dok-Ja suddenly felt lonely for some reason.」

Could it be that I had failed to understand a single thing about the 'Ways of Survival' –

no, wait, regarding my companions, instead? Maybe, because I was drunk in the fantasy of witnessing the Conclusion, I actually ended up missing all the countless words that had to be read in order to reach the true Conclusion?

[You have currently resolved 0 complaints.]

A scenario that previously felt like nothing important suddenly felt as imposing and difficult as a 'Great Fable' now.

I plopped down below a parasol and dazedly looked on. Someone lightly tapped me on the shoulder.

"How goes it with your scenario?"

Yu Sang-Ah grinned refreshingly.

I replied with a powerless grin of my own, and she addressed me again. "Well, Dok-Ja-ssi, your communication skill has always been a little lacking, so it can't be helped, I guess. You were also like that back when we were working for the company."

“…I was?"

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"You really didn't speak all that much to other people."

I became utterly speechless after she mercilessly carpet-bombed me with facts. But then again, after giving it a bit of thought, it made total sense. I grew up without a friend from a young age. I wasn't clued in on how to socialise with other people, and back then, I only thought about how to weasel myself out of the company meal get-together. I figured that, rather than wasting time doing that, I might as well read the

'Ways of Survival' one more time instead.

「Kim Dok Ja y ou h ave a fri end no w」

And then, here was an inorganic 'substance' that tried to rile me up by saying that it was my friend.

Yu Sang-Ah settled down beneath the parasol too, and observed our companions with a relaxed gaze. Perhaps she was going for the camping look herself, because rather than the usual Buddhist robe, she was now wearing a casual one-piece with a wide-brimmed straw hat. She sure knew how to match the atmosphere regardless of where she was. She was someone too good to be kept in the run by a pretty useless leader, at the very least.

"Sang-Ah-ssi, do you by any chance regret getting in the subway that day?"

I wasn't sure why I asked her that. Even now, the events of the very first scenario remained vivid in my mind.

「If only Yu Sang-Ah's bicycle didn't get stolen.」

If she got her start from somewhere else, then she might not have become

's Incarnation. Maybe, she wouldn't have to die, either. She wouldn't have to experience the pain of reincarnation, too…

"No, I don't."

I had never seen such a determined expression on her face before.

"So, Dok-Ja-ssi. You mustn't regret anything, either."

"Pardon? Regarding what…?"

"I mean, everything."

I wasn't sure what to say to her. It felt as if I'd only sound like an ass just by thanking her or expressing my gratitude. The 'Ways of Survival' never taught me what I should say in moments like this.

As if she could read my mind, she grinned refreshingly and pointed to someone over yonder.

"I think it'll be for the best that you speak to that person first."

Fin.

"My concerns?"

"Yes. Uhm, like… If you're unhappy about your work, or…"

The first person I went to speak to was Yi Seol-Hwa. She was wearing an outdoor scientist garb, and with a small magnifying glass, studied every nook and cranny of my face as if I was some sort of an unidentified herb. She then replied to my question.

"Mm, well, I don't particularly have one."

She might be saying that, but there was no way that she didn't have any complaints.

"As the head representative of the company, I can only apologise to you. I'm aware that you have worked hard to protect Seoul during our absence."

"H-mm."

"It must've been very difficult to…"

"Do you really think so? And not like, staying back in Seoul must've been so much easier?"

Her voice sounded sharp, prompting my lips to close shut before I realised it.

"I knew it. That's what you were really thinking of. You were just being sarcastic, yes?"

"No, never. I wouldn't."

"I know that others had been entering dangerous scenarios. Even if that was the case, remaining in Seoul wasn't all plain sailing, you know." Yi Seol-Hwa lowered her gaze and began searching for something within the bushes once more. "It should be around here somewhere…"

「Yi Seol-Hwa has never taken a day off.」

Her Fable began speaking up for her, instead.

「After the group departed from the [Industrial Complex], she operated its sickbay and looked after the patients. Every day, the injured suffering from similar types of wounds would rush in. She watched them die, and while looking at their passing, she thought about her companions.」

"I won't be much help in the latter half of the scenarios. I'm well aware of my own potential, and my Constellation is also only a Historical Figure-grade as well. But, I still do my best every day."

For sure, the intensity of Status floating about her vicinity felt quite different from before. It wasn't as if her combat abilities had

improved, but well, how should I put this? It was like her pool of knowledge in the skills had gotten even more profound.

"Whoever it is in the , I can save that person as long as he or she still breathes. I can ensure that no one will die."

It was true that Yi Seol-Hwa's current growth rate was unmatched in any of the regression turns from the original novel. If my guess was correct, then she should soon reach the pinnacle of 'Life and Death Miraculous Doctor'. Without a doubt, she was a necessary person to achieve my dream ending.

"What kind of a person was I in the novel you read, Dok-Ja-ssi?"

I got flustered for a moment there by the unexpected question. "You were an important person."

"Okay, by how much?"

Yi Seol-Hwa was one of the heroines to appear in the 'Ways of Survival'. However, I couldn't come out and say that she was Yu Jung-Hyeok's lover from the past. From the get-go, I thought that he wouldn't want that to be known… And most importantly, I wasn't sure if that would be an appropriate description offor the person called 'Yi Seol-Hwa'. Who was she, really?

"Well, that…"

Just before I could carry on, Yi Seol-Hwa's expression brightened and she shouted out.

"Aht! Found it!"

Her hand was holding a small flower. That must be the herb she was searching for. I immediately recognised what that was.

「White Ghostly Flame Flower. The final ingredient for the 'Life and

Death' pill.」

At a casual glance, it looked like an ordinary wildflower. Eating this herb alone had no effect whatsoever. However, the miraculous elixir that was the [Life and Death Pill]

could never be concocted without this herb.

She began smiling like a little kid. This sense of life that couldn't be felt from the pages of the 'Ways of Survival' was emanating vividly right before my eyes.

「This is Yi Seol-Hwa.」

That's why I gave up on recalling the words from the novel altogether. And then, I said some lame things instead. "You're the best doctor that I know of."

Praise cooked up by a small kid might be better sounding than that.

Even so, Yi Seol-Hwa grinned back at me. "Thank you. Even if you didn't mean it."

"I did mean it, though…"

"Please wait for me. I will turn those empty words into reality soon."

I watched her leave in search of another herb, and came to a realisation. What she was curious about earlier wasn't the 'Ways of Survival'. Unlike me, she didn't need such a novel in the first place.

[You have currently resolved 0 complaints.]

I hadn't made any headway into the scenario, but I didn't feel so bad.

"It's not that easy, right?"

I looked behind and found Yu Sang-Ah once more.

"…Yes, it's not easy."

"But, that's only natural. If you could finish up all the conversations you had been putting off as if it's some kind of an event, then that's something out of a novel, not reality."

"I guess so."

"Even then, you must carry on."

I nodded my head. "Who do you think I should speak to next?"

"It'd been better if you did it yourself, but I'll help you again this one last time."

She used her hand to shield her eyes and scanned our companions. It was then, a message entered my ear.

[Currently, 's contracted workers are feeling dissatisfied.]

…Contracted workers? Did our Nebula have people like that?

Yu Sang-Ah then pointed to a spot. "Why don't you head over there this time?"

The moment I looked there, I realised who the 'contracted workers' were.

*

A short while later, I was addressing three people standing before me.

"I have something to discuss with you."

"What is it? I'm really busy so hurry up. I must go and find that 'Black Flame Dragon's Star Relic', right now!!"

Han Myeong-Oh raised his voice as if to urge me along. Gong Pil-Du and his disinterested face, and the pouting Jang Ha-Yeong were standing next to him. I could easily tell that they weren't exactly happy about being summoned here like this.

Even though they had experienced scenarios together with us, they hadn't joined the

properly yet.

"Everyone, there's something you should know first."

I decided to tell them something that they didn't know, a piece of information that

's companions already knew – the 'Ways of Survival'.

It was a big decision on my part to tell them about it, but rather contrary to my initial expectation, Gong Pil-Du's reaction was lukewarm at best.

"There was a time when I used to believe everything in the land price pamphlets. I guess you're still too naï ve."

"Pardon?"

"Young people these days…"

It seemed that Gong Pil-Du didn't really get what I was saying.

On the other hand, Han Myeong-Oh seemed to be under a great mental shock. "S-so you knew everything, yet you just left me to end up in that wretched state??"

Jang Ha-Yeong also seemed to be surprised, albeit for different reasons. "So, that's how it was. That's why you knew so much back in the Demon World…"

Thankfully, their reactions weren't as bad as I thought. But then again, they had already met a regressor and plenty of reincarnators, so maybe, my story didn't sound so crazy to them by now.

I breathed a sigh of relief inwardly and continued on. "There's only one reason why I told you this information. I'd like to formally hire you into the ."

My words caused the three to exchange glances with each other.

The first one to speak was Gong Pil-Du. "On whose authority?"

[Incarnation 'Gong Pil-Du', has joined .]

…Could it be that the term "being coy" was invented for this ahjussi?

Next up was Han Myeong-Oh. "Are you going to retain my previous position as a department head?"

"Well, we don't have any ranks like that, but if you want, I can create one for you."

"Please make sure that you pay your wages on time. As for paternity leave and overtime…"

[Incarnation 'Han Myeong-Oh', has joined .]

Finally, I shifted my gaze over to Jang Ha-Yeong.

[Incarnation 'Jang Ha-Yeong', has joined .]

"…Okay, so, Flame Dragon-ah, something happened just now, and it's…"

She was using her 'Wall' to send out messages of her employment to pretty much everywhere.

Congratulatory messages from her friends in the continued to flood in.

While looking at her being genuinely happy, I grew a lot more complicated in my head.

If I knew she'd be this happy, then I should've let her join us earlier.

"By the way Kim Dok-Ja, why are you suddenly letting me join you?"

She waited for my answer with sparkling eyes.

I had several reasons why I didn't let Jang Ha-Yeong join the .

But at least for today, I didn't want to think about them. I definitely needed her.

However, I didn't bring her into the Nebula simply because her presence was a must during the Conclusion.

"I wanted to witness the end of the scenario with you."

Jang Ha-Yeong's eyes grew wider after she heard me.

I felt uncomfortable while watching her pale cheeks tremble like that. As expected of someone possessing looks that easily slapped Yu Jung-Hyeok's cheeks at least two times in a row.

She blinked her large, clear eyes and energetically nodded her head. "I'll really work hard!"

She clenched her fists tightly and began typing away once more.

[Congratulations! You have resolved the complaint of the contracted worker!]

[You have currently resolved 1 complaint.]

I finally succeeded with one.

So, being the head representative was this tough, huh.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is asking you if the rumour is true.]

What rumour??

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is asking you if you

really confessed to Jang Ha-Yeong.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is asking the maknae Sun Wukong…]

…Just what kind of a rumour was spreading around here?

I had no idea what she was so busily typing away there, but regardless, I could see Jang Ha-Yeong diligently tapping on the imaginary keyboard in the air.

"Hey, you. Come and eat supper!"

Han Su-Yeong's loud shout came from afar.

The delicious aroma wafting in from somewhere attracted the companions and we gathered around one by one. Then, Han Su-Yeong stared at Yu Jung-Hyeok as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

"Well, then. Shall we taste your high-and-mighty cooking skill in action, then?"

“…And why should I share my cooking with you?" He glared at the rest of the group with a menacing glare, before turning around to leave while throwing these following words behind. "… There are leftovers that side, so why don't you eat that."

We looked over in the direction he was pointing at. And straight away, we became utterly speechless.

「They were now witnessing the essence of cooking.」

We all settled down quietly on the table like a bunch of mice that got entranced by the pied piper, and then, began rubbing our eyes in disbelief.

These were dishes created out of the monster that Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung caught, as well as with the medicinal herbs Yi Seol-Hwa had found. No, hang on… How could he even come up with a feast of this scale with only those ingredients?

I was pretty certain that the dining table of 'Shi Huangdi who dreamed of Immortality'

wouldn't be as flashy as this one.

"Wow. Master, you gotta come and cook during my funeral, okay?"

"Why your funeral, though? That's really an ominous declaration, you know."

The group began hurriedly chowing down the grub. Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Ji-Hye, Han Myeong-Oh, Gong Pil-Du, even Jang Ha-Yeong… They were all seriously focused on eating right now.

Even Han Su-Yeong and Yu Sang-Ah, too.

"Hey, hold up. That's my share."

"There's enough to go around for everyone. Why are you being so greedy?"

Some even began fighting over the food, too.

"Ahjussi, please try this one!"

"Hyung, this one, too!"

Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung sat on either side of me and shoved spoonfuls of food into my mouth without a moment's rest. My cheeks swelled up like a hamster as I chewed the rice, and of course, I didn't forget to feed the kids side dishes in the meantime. It was tasty. Seriously tasty. So tasty, in fact, I was almost thankful that the

'Ways of Survival' had become reality for a moment there.

Shin Yu-Seung's eyes rolled around as she chewed the meat, then she whispered in a small voice. "It's like we're on a school trip…"

When I heard her, I immediately wanted to kick myself to death for feeling thankful

that the 'Ways of Survival' had become reality.

The school field trip – one of the things children had lost in this world.

I placed my hands on the heads of the kids and spoke to them. "You're right. It's like a field trip."

Although, the one learning from this trip wasn't the kids but me.

"Ahjussi, what would you like to do after the scenarios are over?"

"Hyung will live with me."

"I wasn't asking you!"

What I want to do after the scenarios were over… Normally, I'd have smiled and glossed over the topic, but for some reason, I… I ended up uttering out something without realising it.

"I want to buy a really big house and live together with everyone."

When I raised my head, I noticed that the once-noisy surroundings had fallen into an eerily silence. Yi Ji-Hye, Jeong Hui-Won, Gong Pil-Du… even Han Su-Yeong was looking at me, her mouth agape.

Jeong Hui-Won was the first to fire the salvo. "… In that case, Dok-Ja-ssi, you'll be paying for the house, yes?"

…Ng?

"Ahjussi, you're really loaded, so you might be able to get a house in Gangnam."

"I'll sell you my land."

"If it's possible, somewhere close to the kids' school…"

I had no idea that something I just threw out there would cause such a

ripple.

And so, the group chatted about the potential house I'd buy throughout the supper.

Stuff about how the interior should look like, or how many rooms it needed to have…

Washing the dishes was left to me and Jeong Hui-Won, the two losers from the rock-paper-scissors. I could have won by using [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint], but of course I wouldn't do that during this trip.

[You have acquired a new Fable!]

[You have acquired the Fable, 'the One who Yanked Out the Conscience's Fur'.]

…Also, it was nice to get a new Fable, too.

As I was cleaning the dishes, I spotted something falling in the distant skies above. It was a shooting star. Falling stars that left behind lengthy trails.

Most likely, those were planets that were falling for real.

The was marching towards its own oblivion.

Jeong Hui-Won looking up at the sky next to me spoke up. "It's like back then in the

[Cinema Dungeon]."

I nodded my head. For sure, it was kind of similar to that day. We were also together like this on the rooftop of the dungeon. We were looking at the falling stars and making our wishes.

"Dok-Ja-ssi, you asked me to become your sword back then."

Indeed, I asked her to become my comrade in that place. And after that, she had become the greatest ally anyone could ask for. Without her, I wouldn't have been able to arrive at this moment in time.

“…But, someone else became the literal sword instead of me."

Those words made me shift my gaze over to the [Steelsword] laying quietly on the ground. Even as everyone was taking their much-deserved break, the sole person to miss out on the festivities was right there. Yi Hyeon-Seong with his heart not beating

– he seemed to regain his consciousness sporadically, but he remained as a sword and didn't want to move.

"Please do not worry. Before we head off to the next scenario, I'll definitely wake up Hyeon-Seong-ssi."

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"You know of a way?"

I nodded my head.

Yi Hyeon-Seong's issue wasn't the only one we need to deal with, though.

We now required much greater power. Because, our goal didn't simply stop at clearing the scenarios, that's why.

To fight the as well as the entirety of the , I needed to start gathering Constellations that would stand with us.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', is looking at you.]

And Yi Hyeon-Seong's Constellation backer would be the first to join us.

Jeong Hui-Won spoke up as if my confident expression left an impression on her. "By the way, Dok-Ja-ssi?"

"Yes?"

"Will it be fine for you to stand around here trying to look cool? I mean, aren't you in the middle of a scenario? You really aren't a being-kidnapped-and-dying enthusiast, are you?"

"Uhm…"

Along with her words, the scenario window popped up before my eyes.

[The day is coming to a close.]

[You have currently resolved 1 complaint.]

I reconfirmed the failure penalty of the sub scenario once more.

+

Failure: Death (?)

+

I looked up at the shooting star in the sky.

"…Maybe, this might very well be my Final Scenario."

Fin.

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The time limit for the scenario was until midnight today. It was already nine PM, so there were less than three hours remaining.

…How did the time fly by so quickly, anyway?

I heard that happy moments would pass you by really quickly. It must've been true.

「Four complaints still need to be answered. And only three hours remain.」

No matter what, I was cutting it real close. From the beginning, solving five of such difficult missions was clearly forcing it.

In the end, I decided to resort to 'that'.

"Biyu-yah."

Dokkaebis had jurisdiction over sub scenarios, so she should be able to control one just fine.

Also, since the failure penalty was not 'death' but 'death(?)', I was thinking that they wouldn't kill me for real, and… Biyu wasn't answering.

"Where are you, our cute little Biyu?"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is cackling at your ill fortune.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is urging you to seriously carry this scenario out…]

Seeing that the channel was open, Biyu must be nearby for sure, but…?

I decided to pull out the hidden trump card.

"Ba-aht."

That caused the empty air to quiver a little, then a ball of cotton with a small horn attached on top rose out from there.

[Aba-aht.]

Biyu popped out with a "Poof!" and began giggling away.

I didn't smile back, though. "Biyu-yah. I'm sorry about this, but can you, like, cancel this scenario…?"

[Eh-oh-bah-aht.]

I couldn't tell whether she was trying to say 'eva' or 'over'.

[Constellations agreeing with the applicable scenario's Probability are rejecting the scenario cancellation.]

…Hang on, could this be a bounty scenario, instead?

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is arguing that this scenario is a necessity for you.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is criticising you, telling you not to use a cowardly method.]

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is saying that if you're a true comrade to them, then you should use your valour and tenacious spirit to…]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is simply denying the cancellation.]

…They are in sync with each other only in times like this, aren't they?

“…Yes, yes. I get it now."

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is cheering on his maknae.]

I couldn't really get used to the new Modifier for the Great Sage Heaven's Equal. We parted ways right away after the 'Journey to the West' scenario came to an end, but I

knew we'd get to see each other soon enough.

In any case… Who should it be? Who should I speak to next? It should be someone holding the highest amount of complaints towards me, right?

I studied my companions one by one, leisurely sitting around together after that fulfilling supper. That was when the [Midday Tryst] came flying in my way.

- What are you looking at?

Okay, let's skip Han Su-Yeong for now. Her problems weren't on the level that I could fix anyway.

- You making fun of me?

I continued to search for the next candidate. The next two I spotted were Yu-Seung-ee and Gil-Yeong-ee. While looking at the two lying side by side and patting their slightly bulging tummies, it almost felt as if the [Fruit of Good and Evil] was whispering to me from deep inside my mind.

「If it's their troubles, can't I easily solve them?」

Even if I set aside the cowardly reason for now, I still needed to have a serious talk with Gil-Yeong-ee.

[Constellation Yi Gil-Yeong's Sponsor is staring at you.]

Although he looked the same on the outside as before, Yi Gil-Yeong's Status had a faint trace of demonic aura permeating it. Would it be okay to talk to him now? However, wasn't it too open here?

[Constellation, 'Master of Sky Walk', is observing your actions.]

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming on Aquarius', is focusing her attention on you.]

Not only that, Constellations were watching us, too. I couldn't really imagine how the channel's Constellations would react if I went and carelessly got in touch with 'that side' now.

Even then, I should at least talk to him…

[Currently, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 2nd Stage is in activation.]

…The inside of my head rang with a "Bzz!" and the skill was activated forcibly once more. This was happening rather often lately. I wasn't sure whether it was because I read the 'Ways of Survival' too much, or due to some other reason, but…

「Ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump」

Their voices soon entered my head.

「Dok-Ja hyung will come and talk to me, right?」

「Is he coming over now?」

…Ng??

「I better tell him about a biiiig problem.」

「I must tell him something really shocking.」

「… What if Shin Yu-Seung talks about something bigger than mine?」

「I definitely must say something more shocking than Yi Gil-Yeong.」

My steps came to a halt.

…It was not because I was scared of the kids, though. Anyways. I shifted my gaze to the person crouching next to them, instead.

「… I miss them.」

Yi Ji-Hye with a sad expression was looking at the distant sky. She was an energetic chatterbox usually, so it was rare to see her make such face.

I could guess who she was referring to when she said she missed them.

The first scenario would've been a nightmare to everyone, but it must've been especially worse for her. Even if the was here for her, one person couldn't really substitute for someone else.

I wordlessly approached her and lightly poked her on the shoulder. Yi Ji-Hye looked behind at me. "Uht? what's this, ahjussi? You finished with the dishes?"

"Yeah."

"H-mm… Wait, did you come here because of the scenario?"

"It's not entirely about that. But…"

"I don't have any particular complaints, so you don't need to talk to me, though? Why don't you speak to others first?"

Even now, she was worried about others. No matter how badly she was hurting, she was still thinking of other people's pain first. Yi Ji-Hye from Chungmuro grew up like that. And she grew up into an adult like that, too.

"You can talk to me any time. If you don't want to talk to me, then it'll be fine with someone else, too. But you don't have to huddle in a corner and let it fester inside you."

Maybe she didn't expect me to say something like that, because Yi Ji-Hye began blinking her eyes next.

"Ahjussi, don't try to act cool, okay?"

She smirked and punched me in the shin with her sturdy fist. I thought my bone was broken or something.

[You have currently resolved 1 complaint.]

A simple chat on this level couldn't resolve Yi Ji-Hye's troubles. Even then, I still had to speak to her.

She lightly shook her beer glass around and while standing up, spoke to me. "… Alright, then. Since I'm full, I should go and stretch my limbs for a bit."

"You shouldn't exercise after drinking, you know."

"I feel fine, though?"

Seeing her swing her sword about like that, she definitely was her master's student,

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alright.

…Hang on a bit. Now that I thought about it, there was one guy who should be the most dissatisfied by me around here, wasn't there?

I quickly scanned the campsite, but strangely enough, I couldn't locate that idiot no matter how hard I looked.

"Hey, you deaf?? When someone is calling you, you should…"

Along with a resounding 'Slap!' someone smacked me in the back of the head.

I looked behind and spoke to the culprit. "Hey, Han Su-Yeong…"

"What now?"

"Where is Yu Jung-Hyeok?"

"Yu Jung-Hyeok? He was over th… Uh?"

Only then did she realise it, too. Honestly speaking, that guy usually acted on his own and often disappeared on us without warning, so this shouldn't come across as all that surprising. The problem had to with the fact that he didn't disappear alone this time.

Han Su-Yeong looked into the wide-open rear door of the [X-grade Ferrarghini] and spoke up. "… The 'Secretive Plotter' is gone, too."

*

The 'Secretive Plotter' surrounded in the transparent Sealing Sphere landed on the ground with a thud and roughly rolled around in the dirt. He was still unconscious. Yu Jung-Hyeok quietly looked down on him, then slowly unsheathed the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and addressed the Plotter.

"I know that you're already awake."

The Secretive Plotter slowly opened his eyes. Accompanied by faint sparks, energy from a Fable surged throughout his body. For a moment there, his Fables were returning to him.

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[[You don't seem to know how to enjoy these brief moments of peace.]]

"I don't have a habit of enjoying my peace with an enemy near me."

[[Are you planning to kill me? That is indeed a wise move. However, you should know by now that you can't really kill me.]]

That was true. The 'Secretive Plotter' was another Yu Jung-Hyeok.

Killing him simply meant the creation of another world-line.

Even then, Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't let go of his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. "It'll be far better than watching you mess up this world-line."

The Plotter laughed. They were both Yu Jung-Hyeoks. They may have lived two different lives, but their nature as Yu Jung-Hyeok was the same. And that was why they could understand each other's thought process the best.

[[Do you believe that your power alone is enough to kill me? Without Kim Dok-Ja's Fable, the current you can't fight against an 'Outer God'.]]

"That might be the case, but killing you will be rather simple. I only have to shatter that [Sealing Sphere]."

A faint trace of unrest flitted in and out of the Plotter's expression.

Currently, the 'Secretive Plotter' was inside the unstable [Apocalypse Dragon's Sealing Sphere] created by the 999th turn's Uriel.

"You're deliberately not removing the [Sealing Sphere]. If you break it, then the

'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' will appear from the gap in space and time, that's why."

It only had been for a brief moment, but still, Yu Jung-Hyeok got to steal a glance into the memories of the 1864 regression turns engraved into the 「Hellscape of Eternity」.

That's where he got to learn partial information on 'Outer Gods'. The Hounds that chased after the Abyss – he learned about the Hounds of Tindalos during that time, too.

They were the cleaners capable of detecting the distortion in a world-line.

"They can only intrude from where angles below 90 degrees exist. The normal you wouldn't be troubled by something like a few Hounds, but with how weakened you are, the story should change greatly."

The flow of Status loaded onto the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] grew thicker. Yu Jung-Hyeok too hadn't fully recovered from his wounds, so fighting the Plotter head-on was impossible.

However, shattering the Sealing Sphere shouldn't pose a challenge.

The Plotter's expression changed, perhaps after figuring out Yu Jung-Hyeok's intentions. It was the face of a man who had accepted 'something'.

And so, just as Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] was about to make a move…

"Oppa."

Someone's head poked out from the bushes.

"What are you doing?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok was taken by surprise and while turning his head towards her, shouted out. "Yu Mi-Ah! Don't come closer!"

Dismay brushed past his expression next. Because he had focused all of his perception on the 'Secretive Plotter', he ended up making such an egregious mistake.

"Go back to where our companions are! This place is dangerous!"

"Don't want to."

She replied in a cold voice, something she had never used before.

Yu Jung-Hyeok replied in stupefaction. "… What?"

"You don't even come back to Earth all that often anyway, so stop nagging me. You promised to stay with me for a few days, didn't you? Both Su-Gyeong ahjumma and Gyeong-Ran ahjumma are always busy, you know? And I'm tired of listening to Grandma Bok-Sun's stories of the past, too!"

Yu Mi-Ah clearly enunciated every single word as she strode forward. Yu Jung-Hyeok's judgement blurred for a moment then.

She seized that opening and quickly ran towards the front of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

"By the way, he looks exactly like you, oppa. Who are you exactly?"

Before long, she was within the touching distance of the Plotter. Yu Jung-Hyeok grew anxious. He wanted to swing his sword right now and shatter the [Sealing Sphere], but his little sister might get swept up in the air current if he made the slightest mistake here.

As he began deliberating on his options, she placed her hand on the transparent

[Sealing Sphere] and innocently asked the figure inside. "Are you trapped in this thing?

You want me to help you get out of there?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok dearly wanted to move and pull her away from there right now. But for some reason, he couldn't.

The 'Secretive Plotter' was staring at Yu Mi-Ah.

His eyes were trembling from a very powerful agitation. Even Yu Jung-Hyeok was surprised to see such an expression appear on the Plotter's face, someone who had lived through an untold amount of time.

Yu Mi-Ah pressed him further in the meantime.

"Come on now, answer me."

Fin.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was prepared to swing his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] if the

'Secretive Plotter' tried to do something foolish, but rather unexpectedly, the latter easily answered back. He didn't even use his true voice, either.

"You're right. I am trapped in here."

His real, pure voice was heard for the first time.

That prompted Yu Mi-Ah to reply with a bright smile. "Ask my oppa to free you. He's super strong, you see?"

She spoke in an innocent voice, but he replied with a slow shake of his head. "… I can't leave this thing."

"What? Why not?"

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply.

"Wait, did my oppa do something to you? He threatened you with scary words, didn't he??"

“…No, that's not it."

"It's not? What then?"

The Plotter didn't reply again. Without saying anything, he stared at Yu Mi-Ah. He stared for a long time at the one person that no longer existed for him.

And for the first time ever, a faint smile formed on his lips.

"It's because I chose to be in here."

Yu Jung-Hyeok saw that smile and couldn't say anything. Yu Mi-Ah was busy asking

what he meant, and meanwhile, the Plotter quietly stared back at her.

The latter slowly raised his hand, and his palm overlapped with hers through the thin transparent layer. Their hand sizes were fairly similar. These two palms may have overlapped after transcending time and space, but they could never truly meet.

"Uh? Uhm…"

It was then, Yu Mi-Ah blinked slowly and began faltering a little.

"Why am I so sleepy…?"

Her body slowly fell to the ground. Yu Jung-Hyeok quickly dashed to her side and embraced her.

"You bastard, what have you done…?!"

[[… I only helped her dream of nice things.]]

Yu Jung-Hyeok studied his little sister. For sure, her Incarnation Body showed no signs of any strange symptoms. No, she simply was in a deep slumber, softly murmuring indecipherable sleep-talk like "beach volleyball" and "squid party", etc.

He glared at the 'Secretive Plotter' with a complicated expression. No

matter how weakened he was, by using Yu Mi-Ah he would have been able to escape from this situation pretty easily. However, he didn't do that.

He simply stared longingly at the sleeping face of the girl, instead.

“…What happened to Mi-Ah in your world?"

[[She survived.]]

He answered immediately.

[[And also died.]]

That too was immediate.

"What does that even…”

Just as Yu Jung-Hyeok opened his lips, he understood what those answers meant. So, he shut his mouth right away.

Seemingly-crying sparks ever so faintly danced around. Under the pretext of the

[Disconnected Film Theory], the memories of these two beings trembled and their Fables shifted.

「In one world-line, Yu Mi-Ah survived for a long time. Even after he died.」

The world of a man who lived 1864 lifetimes – just what kind of a world would that be?

「However, in another world-line, she died.」

A Regressor might have lived far more 'presents' than anyone out there, but in reality, he was nothing more than a ghost of the past. He was an existence that had to move onto the next turn because he

failed to alter the past.

0th turn, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th… and 1863rd.

This being was not a 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' from any of those regression turns. But, he was the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' that belonged to all the worlds, the man who carried all the worlds as his burden.

And that was why he was more Yu Jung-Hyeok than any other Yu Jung-Hyeoks.

[[You're pitying me.]]

"Who would do that to a…"

[[Do you believe that my life was a misery?]]

Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't tell if that was a form of sympathy directed at himself. The blade of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] he held tightly was faintly trembling.

Why was he hesitating now? He had come this far already, so what was left to hesitate?

Just because he heard a bit of this bastard's past history…

The 'Secretive Plotter' opened his lips. [[Did you know? There was this young boy in the front-most subway car that always died during every regression turn.]]

That question came out of nowhere. Yu Jung-Hyeok naturally recalled the events of the subway train. The very first scenario, the very first encounter with Hell that he had to experience every single time.

However, Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't know anything about such a boy. Because, there were simply too many people who died in that manner back then.

[[While regressing several times, I tried to prevent his death, but it was impossible.]]

"…"

[[He was really a young boy. Younger even than Yi Gil-Yeong. However, even such a child had to 'prove his credentials'. For all of the 1863 lives, that child couldn't even put up a proper fight and had to die. He died, and died, and died over and over again.]]

Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't say a single word.

The Plotter asked him again. [[Between a man who regressed 1863 times, and a child who has to repeatedly die for 1863 times with no recollections of it, which one do you think is actually more miserable?]]

"That is…"

The Plotter was implying this – that your pity had no meaning, no value whatsoever.

Even then, Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't readily accept that. Indeed, there was no meaning in comparing the importance of different miseries. However, that also didn't mean that

'misery' didn't exist.

[[The tries to make the lives of everyone into 'Gi-Seung-Jeon-Gyeol'.

However, a life was never supposed to be that. No, it's an unreasonable thing that can end at any time, whether it's 'Gi(beginning)', 'Seung(development)', or even during

'Jeon(climax)'. And that's why, even if my life comes to an end here, it shouldn't come as a surprise.]]

Did the boy from the subway make the same expression as this man? Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't tell.

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared back at him with a pair of quiet, still eyes.

Yu Jung-Hyeok stared back into those eyes for the longest time, before averting his gaze away while lowering the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

“…You'll end up seeing that boy's death for the 1864th time if you regress again."

In the end, he returned his sword back to its scabbard. This could be the wrong decision. Even then, Yu Jung-Hyeok had made up his mind.

Maybe he too didn't expect such a choice, because the 'Secretive Plotter' remained speechless for a long while.

[[You've been greatly influenced by Kim Dok-Ja, it seems.]]

"Shut your mouth. I can kill someone like you at any…”

Multiple presences were drawing near. Voices were calling out to him. They were Kim Dok-Ja and Han Su-Yeong, plus those of the 's people.

[[Although it irks me to admit this, let me say that one thing is for certain. This worldline is different from any that I have lived through so far. It's possible that you and your group can truly witness what's beyond that 'Wall'.]]

"…”

[[However, do not keep your hopes up, thinking that you'll see the Conclusion you desire. And also – even if that Conclusion wasn't what you initially wanted…]]

The Plotter's true voice suddenly grew fainter. His eyelids were slowly closing up. He was falling into another bout of deep slumber.

Just as Kim Dok-Ja emerged out from the thicket, the Plotter finished what he wanted to say.

[[… Do not think of this world as a failed turn.]]

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"We played beach volleyball."

That was Yu Mi-Ah's answer after I asked her about what happened here.

"I'm telling you, we grilled squids, and I played beach volleyball with my oppa. Could it be that one's power of comprehension is lower if you're ugly?"

I wanted to tell her that there were three things wrong in her statement. One, we were not near an ocean. Two, I wasn't ugly, and my power of comprehension was…

“…Well, I guess nothing serious has happened here."

Han Su-Yeong muttered in relief.

Indeed, we couldn't see any traces of Yu Jung-Hyeok causing an accident, and the

'Secretive Plotter' was still stuck in a deep slumber.

I put the Plotter back inside the [X-grade Ferrarghini]. There were a few things that didn't sit well with me, but now wasn't the time to grill the one responsible.

"Okay, everyone, please gather around! Let's start the campfire!"

The flames rose up thickly and brightened the darkness of the campsite. Time was approaching closer to midnight. Only then did I remember something important.

"H-hang on! My scenario hasn't…!"

Dammit, I forgot all about it because of Yu Jung-Hyeok.

I could hear Biyu humming "Ba-aht, ba-aht" just above my head.

[Scenario time limit has elapsed!]

Would I really get killed like this?

[Sub Scenario – 'Workers' Off-day' has ended!]

[You need to resolve a total of 5 complaints.]

[You have currently resolved 1 complaint.]

[You have resolved all of your employees' complaints.]

[New Fable related to the is being generated.]

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…Uh?

"Seriously, man. It's like you forgot your wits somewhere or some such…" muttered Han Su-Yeong, as she stared at the side of my face.

Companions were giggling to themselves while looking at me.

It was then, I recalled their replies whenever I tried to talk to them.

- I don't have any particular complaints.

That was for real?

"No one here will blame you, you know."

Han Su-Yeong's disinterested voice spread out. We sat around soaking in the bonfire without saying anything else. I thought I could sense their hearts contained in this silence and that caused my emotions to well up for some reason.

Jeong Hui-Won added something on top. "Well, if you want me to find something to talk to you about, then I can think of one, but it's not a complaint, so…"

Even though the warm bonfire was before me, why did a chill creep down my back just then?

"In any case, we rested really well today. Someone didn't seem to have gotten any rest, though."

Yu Sang-Ah spoke, and Yi Ji-Hye followed her up on that.

"But, is it over like this? Aren't we going to, like, light candles and start sobbing, or write stuff on a 'rolling paper'?"

"This ain't even a real school trip, so why should we? Besides, the paper…"

While listening to Han Su-Yeong's retort, I began thinking.

'Rolling paper' written by her, was it… That might be quite interesting, indeed.

Han Su-Yeong suddenly stopped talking there and looked at me before asking a question.

"You want me to write one for you?"

"Not really. We aren't little kids anyway."

"Wait a minute. Didn't you say you never had any friends and didn't even go to

'membership trainings' either? I guess you've never received one before, then."

If the total reserve of my mental energy declined during this trip, then

it was all Han Su-Yeong's fault.

A few members of blessed with strong drive had already purchased pens and large papers from the [Dokkaebi Bundle]. Seriously, though, these greedy Dokkaebis even charged Coins for something like that…?

Yu Jung-Hyeok sitting across me on the other side of the campfire seemed to be angry as well.

"I won't participate in something like this."

…Although, his reason for anger seemed to be different from mine.

Nevertheless, seeing my companions gathered around closely and scribbling on their papers gave me this fresh perspective on things. It's like this was a writing get-together for the poor, friend-less Kim Dok-Ja.

While everyone was writing their names on the papers and passing it along, Yi Gil-Yeong suddenly raised his hand up. "Hyung, I bought this off the [Dokkaebi Bundle], so can I fire it?"

Shin Yu-Seung discovered the toy in the boy's hand and her expression brightened up instantly. "Uh? Isn't that the same thing people were firing around the Han River?"

"Yeah, I remembered that so I bought it."

"Let me try it, too!"

"No way. You buy your own. It's 2000 Coins, you know."

Yi Gil-Yeong was currently holding onto a 'Parachute Helicopter'. I had seen that a couple of times before, too. It was a toy that, when you pulled hard at the attached

string and then let go, it'd fly up into the sky while emitting bright

light.

His toy seemed a bit special though, as it featured four large wings shaped like a square.

…Besides all that, though, that thing cost 2000 Coins??

"Okay, I'm gonna fire it!"

Yi Gil-Yeong fired the 'parachute helicopter' into the air. The toy flew up and while spinning around vigorously, dyed the surroundings with bright light. The light scattered as if it was fireworks going off. Even though they should've been familiar with far more spectacular sights than this, the group still looked on genuinely impressed.

The square-shaped wings of the helicopter spun around quickly and formed a circle.

I thought it looked like a portal. A portal, that led to the world we used to live in. We might not be able to go back anymore, but still, I felt the nostalgia of that world from it.

It was around then that a system message resounded out.

[Incarnation, 'Yi Gil-Yeong', has used the item 'Parachute Helicopter (Extra-large optical screen)'!]

The spinning wings of the helicopter grew larger and larger, and eventually, changed shape to that of a huge screen.

Yi Ji-Hye frowned deeply. "What the heck. It was a hologram panel? We now have to watch a scenario even in this place?"

"Yi Gil-Yeong, did you even read the user's manual before…"

"N-no, I thought it was just a helicopter, so I…"

Just as the boy tried to make his excuse, a small earthquake suddenly rocked the vicinity. The expressions on the companions hardened instantly.

"What kind of crap is it this time…?"

Accompanying Han Su-Yeong's words, we all focused our attention on the screen in the air. And when we did, we understood the reason for the earthquake. First of all, it didn't belong to the Korean peninsula.

The 'optical screen' was now displaying the American continent. And right before our eyes, that large continent was disappearing in its entirety.

Because of a gigantic island rising up from the deepest part of the Earth.

Along with the entrance of that island, the American continent was being erased from the map itself.

[The applicable world-line has reached its critical point!]

[Elevation of the forgotten islands has begun!]

Yu Jung-Hyeok, his expression hardened, quietly muttered out.

"The end has begun."

Fin.



PDF by: traitorAIZEN


멸망한 세계
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OMNISCIENT READER
WEBNOVEL
FICTIONAL STORIES HUB

전지적 독자 시점

We headed back to Seoul right away.

The first thing we confirmed was the safety of the [Industrial Complex].

"We haven't detected any other strange phenomena after that event," said Aileen, currently in charge of the central situation room.

The display panel in the room was showing the footage shot near the Pacific Ocean. A gigantic island was rising up from the part of the ocean close to the American continent. I had no doubt that this was one of the 'calamities' I knew of.

Back in the 'Ways of Survival', the master of that island was a very powerful upper-rank Outer God. Our issue now would be whether it was the same guy or not,

"My mother?"

"She's currently at the Eastern coastline."

“…Eastern coastline?"

[The rise of the forgotten island has begun!]

As the system message resounded out, we witnessed the waves rushing in at the other side of the Pacific. An unprecedented scale of terrain alteration had occurred, so it was obvious that an equally-incredible volume of tsunami waves would crash into the various parts of the world pretty soon. Naturally, the one to bear the worst of it was the United States.

- Kwa-gagagagk!

Horrible screams of Incarnation Bodies resounded out and the streets of New York were being swept away. Tsunami waves weren't the end – using the waves themselves, the lower-ranked Outer Gods, the 'Nameless Ones' were rushing in, as well. These low-

ranked creatures were flooding in unchecked to tear and devour the American mainland.

There was no time to ask for help, either. Almost half of the continent had disappeared in less than thirty minutes after the calamity began. One hour later, the whole of the USA was covered in a jet-black aura.

The scale of this calamity was so great that the [Dark Castle] or the [Disaster of Floods]

couldn't even remotely compare in the scope.

"Could it be that my mother…"

Aileen nodded her head and added something else. "I'm not… entirely sure if it qualifies as a good thing, but."

Next up, the display panel switched to the eastern coastline of the Korean Peninsula.

As expected, the tsunami wave had reached this far, as well. Although the height of the wave was much lower compared to the one that hit America, and there were no

'Nameless Ones' riding on it, a tsunami wave still presented an enormous natural disaster all on its own.

- Oh, the Wind God of the Heavens!

As soon as my mother's yell came to an end, powerful gusts of wind exploded out from the folding fan she was holding. Pungbaek who acted all stiff and uptight back in the

'Great War of Saints and Demons', was pulling his weight this time, it seemed.

Even Jo Yeong-Ran, who could be called my mother's right hand, was taking an active part in the event, as well.

[Great Fable, 'Shindansu', has begun its storytelling!]

must've been paying attention to this event, because the [Shindansu]'s Fable had planted its roots deeply into the ocean and was blocking the disaster by using the Korean Peninsula's Probability.

While looking as if she just lost ten years of her life, Han Su-Yeong muttered dazedly.

"… Anyways, isn't that woman in the United States, too?"

There was only one person that Han Su-Yeong would refer to as 'that woman'.

"Couldn't she have used her [Precognition] to predict that?"

"I was about to speak to you in regards to that matt…"

Even before Aileen could finish, the side door to the situation room opened up and a certain someone made her entrance. Confirming the visitor's identity, Yu Jung-Hyeok immediately reached towards the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

"We didn't come to fight, so stay your sword, Conquering King."

Her [Eye of Great Demon] vibrated brightly.

They were the Prophet Anna Croft and the 'Zarathustras' she led.

*

"The alert has been issued five hours ago. Most have escaped to other parts of the world, but still, many failed to leave on time."

"Why didn't you ask us for help?"

"We simply didn't have the leeway. And also, we couldn't fully trust the information gleaned from the Precognition, too. It was the first time that such large-scale information on the future had gone through such a sudden change, so I…"

Anna Croft looked quite troubled just then.

A sudden change in the large-scale information on the future – that would be a pretty good indication that even her Precognition didn't possess any merit when it came to the 'Final Scenario'.

Han Su-Yeong asked as if she wanted to nitpick. "What about ? They finished the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' successfully, so they should've started supporting you once more."

Anna Croft bit her lip hard as her head dropped lower. She then muttered softly. "…

They told me to abandon the USA."

The Final Scenario was about to begin. Most likely, not even would have the room to dwell on the fate of some continent from one of the many planets out there.

Because, Earth wouldn't be the only planet experiencing the signs of the impending apocalypse.

The "Ku-gugugu!!" exploding noise came out of the display panel.

[GaGaGaGaGaGak]

[WeareWeareWeareWeareWeare]

The 'Outer Gods' that captured the American coastline began howling out.

I recalled the 95th scenario I experienced during the 1863rd turn. The invasion of the Outer Gods began sooner in that world-line than ours. And soon, we'd end up in a similar state. Because, that's the story the stinking wanted to see, after all.

“…Does South Korea have any countermeasures?"

"Still thinking about it."

"I heard that you secretly contacted a King of Outer Gods."

It seemed that she was talking about the 'Secretive Plotter' here.

"Technically speaking, we have 'captured' him, actually."

Anna Croft's eyes visibly quaked when she heard me. She didn't seem to be aware of that.

"I-in that case… Can this calamity be stopped through him…?"

"He's exhausted a great deal of Probability so that's not going to work. Besides, he's unrelated to this calamity."

"You know something, don't you?"

I didn't reply right away and simply held Anna Croft's gaze.

One needed to offer up their information first if they wanted to learn something new from the others. That was the basics of information exchange.

She must've figured out what I wanted from her, because she suddenly sighed out softly and began telling her story. "I don't have a lot of info to give you."

"You can start with those."

"…Firstly, the current locations for the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' are a portion of the Pacific and the American continent."

I already knew that.

[Applicable location is currently undergoing the 'Great Apocalypse'.]

I confirmed a transparent dome being generated over the American continent as well as the whole of the Pacific Ocean. The 'Nameless Ones' weren't allowed to leave outside the dome, it seemed. That was probably the extent of the Probability the Outer Gods had been permitted at the moment.

"Secondly, the 'Nameless Ones' can't be hunted down with regular weapons. Obviously, the weapons of the past don't work, and even the Star Relics from lower-graded scenarios are useless, as well."

Actually, the display panel did catch the sight of several Incarnations desperately struggling against the 'Nameless Ones'. One of them was the owner of a pretty well-known Star Relic, but his axe failed to cut the flesh of the 'Nameless Ones' properly.

- But, how…?!

The flesh of the Incarnation Body ripped apart by the sharp fangs splattered onto the screen, causing Yi Ji-Hye to frown and turn her head away. I didn't look away but continued to observe the scene closely.

[Exclusive skill, 'Comprehension', is activating!]

On the surface of the 'Nameless Ones' carapaces, I spotted faint letters floating around.

Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke up first. "It's a Stigma."

"It's not just any Stigma, either. If it can stay in an uninterrupted activation like that, then its already in the 'Visualised Fable' stage."

The Visualised Fable. Indeed, it was about time that such a level of Probability would be allowed.

Yu Jung-Hyeok nodded his head in agreement. "Most likely, the king of those 'Nameless Ones' must be a being possessing incredible defensive capabilities."

The dependents of a king would naturally follow their boss's Fable. Just like how the kkoma Yu Jung-Hyeoks, the dependents of the 'Secretive Plotter', had done so.

The 'Outer God' that raised the island in the middle of the Pacific was most likely one of the five kings mentioned in the book written by the Recorders of Fear.

「The calamity of the western world, the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.」

I spoke up as if to reassure my companions. "Please, you don't have to worry too much.

Upper level Constellations should possess weapons that can kill them."

"However, no Constellations are participating in the battle."

For sure, I couldn't see any Constellations inside the display panel. Not even the common Historical Figure-grades.

"We should start gathering them, then."

I glanced at Biyu while getting ready to use my true voice. The channel was abnormally silent for some reason. Everyone must've seen that spectacle, yet there was not a single indirect message so far.

…It was possible that they were fearful of the 'king' that hadn't emerged from the deepest part of the ocean.

"Jang Ha-Yeong."

Our gazes briefly met and she nodded her head. If it was difficult to talk to Constellations through the channel, then it'd be a good idea to borrow her powers. And a short while later…

“…No one's replying."

"Not even one?"

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But, that was not possible. There were so many Constellations in the ,

after all.

"The Black Flame Dragon was the only one that sent me a reply, but… even he said that he's too busy and can't talk…"

"Did you contact ? What about the ?"

"I called them first, but no reply either."

Something was wrong here.

I could somewhat understand if it's the , but should've replied for sure. Not only that, what about Uriel or the Great Sage Heaven's Equal…?

Han Su-Yeong next to me clicked her tongue and spoke up. "It's obvious what happened.

This is the true nature of the creatures called the Constellations."

Each and every Modifier of all the Constellations that cheered us on brushed past my head. There were so many of them, yet none wanted to help us?

Meanwhile, Han Su-Yeong continued on. "Many Constellations watched out Fables.

Some cheered us on, while some were jealous of us. There were variety of reactions, sure. And we earned lots of Coins, too. But, that's as far as it goes."

"…"

"You think the world was truly moved by our stories? Do you really think you have managed to change the ?"

"I'm not that naï ve, but still…"

"Constellations only subscribe to the channels that meet their tastes. They are no longer entertained, so they simply moved onto other channels. That's all."

I couldn't be sure whether Han Su-Yeong was right or not.

[Next location for the Great Apocalypse is 'North-East Asia'.]

[Time remaining until the start of the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' is 14 days,12 hours,

and 7 minutes.]

But, I was sure that the planet Earth would go down the drain if they continued to avoid us.

Jeong Hui-Won asked a question. "What should we do?"

“…Well, it's not as if I didn't foresee something like this happening."

My words caused Han Su-Yeong to narrow her eyes. "You got something?"

"If they are not willing to meet us, then we should go and speak to them, instead."

"Where will you go first, then? As I thought, it's the easiest of the lot, the , right?"

"I think you're probably the only person out there who calls the the easiest."

I ignored the smirking Han Su-Yeong and looked at Jeong Hui-Won.

Asking for 's aid was indeed a priority, but there was something else more urgent than that right now. We had about fourteen days left. With the minimum effort, we needed to get the maximum possible result.

"We should regain our lost comrade first."

What I was looking at, was the Steelsword hanging on Jeong Hui-Won's hips.

[Soul of the Character 'Yi Hyeon-Seong' is in slumber.]

The after-effects of the Steel Transformation 5th stage was worse than I expected, it seemed.

"We'll go meet the 'Master of Steel'."

"The Master of Steel? Will someone like that help us?"

I nodded my head. "The Master of Steel is a powerful Constellation. Although he's not a Myth-grade, there's no doubt we need his powers far more urgently than any top tier

Constellations out there."

"How come?"

"I don't have the time to give you a detailed explanation. For now, let's get ready to move."

We needed an emergency hotline, as well as the minimum level of defensive forces, so Jang Ha-Yeong, Gong Pil-Du, and Yi Seol-Hwa were left behind in the Industrial Complex. I felt bad about leaving them behind again, but after seeing their expressions, I got the feeling that I was actually doing them a huge disservice by thinking that way.

When I thought about it, Yi Seol-Hwa said something similar to that, didn't she?

"Come back soon. And leave this place to us."

Them being left behind in Seoul wasn't easier of the two jobs.

Just like how the 'story' continued on because there were things that hadn't been told yet.

*

We got in the [X-grade Ferrarghini] immediately and entered the dimensional road network.

Our coordinate was OZ-7611. Resplendent stars of the brushed past

us, and tension gradually dyed the expressions of my companions.

"You don't have to be that tense, everyone. Just think of it as going out for a fun outing…

Take it as an extension of that workers' revolution or whatever you called it."

“…But, isn't it working hours right now?"

"I'm saying this because where we're headed off to isn't that scary."

"Where exactly are we going?"

"Mm, well, as I've told you, we're going to the stronghold of the 'Master of Steel'…”

"Just what the heck is that guy's real identity, anyway??" Han Su-Yeong became too

frustrated and shot me that question. "It's more or less possible to guess the identities of other Constellations through their Modifiers, right? The 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is Sun Wukong, while the 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is Dionysus. But this guy, I just can't figure it out. And there was no info on him in the parts that I read, either."

"Well, if you're that curious, why don't you take a guess through the [Predictive Plagiarism]?"

"You want me to use my ability on something this small??"

I shrugged my shoulders.

I took a look at the faces of my companions, and not just Han Su-Yeong but everyone seemed to be really curious about who this 'Master of Steel' could be.

Jeong Hui-Won asked me. "Is he someone from a myth that we know?"

"He's not from a myth, but well, he's a really famous Constellation regardless. Actually, there's even a famous story that used his Fable as its foundation. But, uh… I don't think the kids know about it all that well, though."

My words caused both Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong to become dejected right away.

Just before I could continue on, noises of explosions came from behind us.

“…Those sons of bitches!!"

Han Su-Yeong steering the vehicle cried out in sheer astonishment.

Shadows of battleships were cast on the rearview mirror. And it wasn't just one or two, either. At a bare minimum, there were dozens of spaceships giving us chase while scattering Ether particles.

Shin Yu-Seung asked me. "Aren't they from a Nebula? Why are they attacking us?"

I couldn't be sure, but those things looked like Fable weapons belonging to great Nebulas such as or .

Yi Ji-Hye frowned deeply and spoke up. "Should I just summon my Geobukseon?"

"No, don't. We don't have the time to fight them. Step on it, Han Su-Yeong!"

We didn't have too much to go until our destination, anyway.

In the blink of an eye, the [X-grade Ferrarghini] shot forward and crossed the dimensional road in a shiver-inducing speed. And soon

afterwards, a new message popped up in the air.

[You've arrived in the coordinate 'OZ-1900'!]

Along with the loud screech, the vehicle came to stop in mid-air. The place we arrived in was actually a train station of sorts. And that station was a small wooden house.

I shouted out. "Everyone, get out quickly! And enter that house!"

Almost at the same time as everyone filed into this house, the [X-grade Ferrarghini]

exploded into bits.

…Goddammit, I hadn't even driven it that many times, too.

I confirmed that everyone was inside and closed the front door shut. Right after that, a powerful tornado was stirred up around the wooden house. The structure rose up in the air, before moving at a break-neck pace.

I shouted again. "Shut the windows and lock them!"

"You think closing the windows will actually help?!"

Han Su-Yeong threw out a tackle, but she still diligently closed the windows. I spotted the mystery Nebula reloading their weapons in the far-off distance. It was indeed an impressive spectacle to witness dozens upon dozens of battleships charging their photon cannons at once. An attack of that magnitude could probably blow up the Korean Peninsula in one go.

Yi Ji-Hye urgently shouted out. "Ahjussi, even if it's now…!"

"Don't worry. We're safe here."

Suddenly, the entire house went through a geometric transformation. Its interior expanded rapidly, and accompanied by loud metallic noises, steel pipes suddenly began

growing throughout the house.

"What the heck? Wasn't this a wooden house??"

[Docking procedure will now commence!]

The house floating in the air was secured to something as the loud docking noises resounded out. And at the same time, the burst of gunfire rained down on us. The firepower on display here was enough to blow away a continent to oblivion.

But then, an unimaginably humongous steel barrier suddenly grew around the entirety of the planet as noisy exhaust sounds resounded out. Streams of gunfire flying in crashed into that barrier and were extinguished without a trace.

My companions carried this rather scared-silly look on their faces from the sheer scale of the barrier as they all turned to look at me.

The exterior of the planet we arrived at could be seen through the windows. It was a city glimmering in a silvery hue. The giant planet that reminded one of a contracting heart.

[Welcome to the Heart of Steel, !]

The Heart of Steel, .

This was the planet where the strongest metal found in the 'grew'.

Fin.

[The ship's hull will now enter the stabilisation process.]

[Please be on standby.]

While listening to the system messages, my companions dazedly looked out of the windows.

The house that got swept away by a tornado, and entering a brand-new world… Surely, some of them should've realised what exactly was going on here.

“…Ahjussi, this, this is 'that', right? That 'Wizard of Oz'?"

Rather unexpectedly, the one to ask me first was Yi Ji-Hye.

"You heard about it?"

"Ng. An old friend of mine used to love a musical related to it."

Yi Ji-Hye was bragging a bit, but then her expression suddenly became gloomy.

Jeong Hui-Won noticed that and quickly took over from there. "By the way, isn't the

'Wizard of Oz' a relatively modern literary work?"

"If I remember correctly, it was created in the year 1900, I believe," said Yu Sang-Ah.

"As expected of Sang-Ah eonni. You really do know everything."

Yi Ji-Hye raised her thumb up.

Jeong Hui-Won carried on. "But, that doesn't make sense, does it? This world is only around one hundred years old, but… I heard from Hyeon-Seong-ssi that the 'Master of Steel' is a far older Constellation than that."

"You're correct, Hui-Won-ssi."

She was asking a valid question. All Fables would go on to construct 'existences'

sooner or later. Yet the age of the Fable in question that could've constructed an existence was too short, so it was only natural that questions would be raised.

"What do you think about the 'Journey to the West'?"

"Pardon?"

"Do you believe that the 'Journey' came about first, or the Great Sage was around way before that?"

That brought about the moment of realisation to my companions.

"Does that mean the 'Master of Steel' existed before that story?"

"It might, or might not."

"What the heck?"

It was as I said.

The ages of those beings that became Fables would gradually get harder to distinguish as time went on. A Constellation would start from a source Fable, but even such a Fable would minutely change as time elapsed.

[The ship stabilisation process has concluded.]

[Exit will now open.]

"Well, we'll find out once we get there," said Han Su-Yeong, as she lightly leaped out first. Yi Ji-Hye and the two kids, looking clearly excited, quickly followed after her.

"Let's get going, as well," said I.

The remaining companions nodded their heads and exited from this 'ship'.

If my memory was correct, the scenario of mirrored the original novel's adventure.

The house flown away by the tornado would arrive in another world called , and

the unfortunate one that gets squashed flat would be the wicked witch…

"What the hell is this?!"

And that's when I heard Yi Ji-Hye's yell. Yup, she must've discovered the witch below the house, then. However…

“…Hey, it's a fake?"

Something was indeed crushed under the house. However, it wasn't an actual witch, but a doll mocked up to look like one. Its state was so filthy and neglected that it would be hard to argue this thing was once a witch.

Han Su-Yeong picked up the broken leg of the mannequin and asked me. "What is this?"

I quietly studied the leg.

「The progression has changed from the original.」

The planet from the 'Ways of Survival' was a type of theme park.

The visitors would follow the route of the original 'Wizard of Oz' which went along the lines of – encounter the Munchkins first, then after receiving different roles to play, travel towards the Emerald Castle.

However, something was wrong here.

「The dwarves, 'Munchkins', are nowhere to be found.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok muttered quietly. "It's somewhat different from what my Master told me."

I agreed with him. What was up with this view? The silver city with bleak winds blowing through it, was showing almost no sign of life.

"Something feels really dreary. Isn't this world supposed to be a fairy tale…?"

Even I, a man who read the 'Ways of Survival' inside out, didn't possess a whole lot of info related to .

It was introduced properly only once during the original novel – during Yu Jung-Hyeok's 999th regression turn. (In the latter half of the 'Ways of Survival', the scene skips happened far more frequently, and stuff related to Oz got relegated to simple lines such as: "They went to Oz to get Fable metal that could strengthen their weapons.")

「It's a sad place, isn't it? It'd have been nicer for a happier story to permeate in this place.」

Yi Hyeon-Seong from the 999th turn said that. It still remained vividly in my head even now. This was where he awakened his powers and ended up inheriting the Status and the will of the 'Master of Steel'.

But no matter how hard I looked, our current view was completely different from the original novel. Why? Was it because we changed a lot of the original's storyline?

This was none other than . It was not one of the planets strongly influenced by the changes caused.

"Shouldn't those fairy-like creatures gather around us to sing and dance while taking us somewhere? Forget about fairies, I can't even see a single fly," said Han Su-Yeong.

The theme park's broken notice board was found discarded on the ground. It was as if we were looking at a closed-down amusement park.

Still, the kids seemed to be really excited regardless. They stuck close to my sides and began muttering away. "It's almost like a haunted house."

We decided to follow the yellow road marked on the ground for the time being.

According to the original, the Emerald Castle should be waiting for us at the end of this road.

And sure enough, we did spot a tall green tower after walking for a bit. And a small city was built around that tower.

「An aged castle has been constructed at the place where all journeys come to an end, so」

「We wish for you to willingly pay us a visit and remember our story.」

Somewhat poignant words were written on the entrance to the city.

It was around then that Yu Jung-Hyeok suddenly spoke up. "I shall act on my own from here."

"What? Why?"

"There is an excellent blacksmith living among the dwarves in this place."

I recalled a certain sentence after hearing him.

「The Oz's metal is permeated with the most ancient type of magic, so… 」

Indeed, was the place of origin for the metal permeated with the oldest Fable in the . Even Yu Jung-Hyeok's weapon from the original was reinforced with the steel from this place.

The greatest supreme sword reborn as the Star Relic after the 's metal and Yu Jung-Hyeok's Fable were intertwined – that was the Star Relic he used in the latter half of the novel, [Heaven Shaking Sword].

Of course, that was the story from the original, and the one to get reinforced this time around would be the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], but still…

"Oz's steel is the strongest in the . Securing suitable weapons is an utmost priority."

After declaring such, Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't even wait for our permission and simply went on his way. Companions looked at me, silently asking if this was okay, and I replied with a simple shrug of my shoulders.

Since I had multiple reasons for coming to anyway, there was a need to split the group here. Also, the whole group wasn't really necessary to save Yi Hyeon-Seong.

I spoke to Yi Ji-Hye and her brilliantly-sparkling eyes. "You should go after him, too.

Don't you want to upgrade your battleship?"

"Hell yes!"

The clearly-happy Yi Ji-Hye quickly trotted away.

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Next up, I looked at Yu Sang-Ah. "Yu Sang-Ah-ssi, can you tail them for the time being?

I'm kind of worried about sending those two alone. And also, the

kids… I'm sure there are lots of things to sightsee around here."

"Let's go! Please hurry!"

The children held onto both hands of Yu Sang-Ah and they soon disappeared towards the high street. Now that the noisy group had been split up like this, I felt a bit hollow for some reason.

The remaining people were Jeong Hui-Won, Han Su-Yeong and me.

Han Su-Yeong muttered out. "So, only Dorothy, the smart Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion remain."

There were four members in the Wizard of Oz's main group. They were the protagonists Dorothy, Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion.

I spoke up. "Since you went ahead and said the 'smart' Scarecrow, I'm guessing that's you."

"Bingo."

"I won't ask you about the other two."

"You're the Cowardly Lion, obviously."

"Thanks."

While chatting and giggling away, we entered the centre of the city. If this place remained as a theme park, such a composition could've been rather fun. Jeong Hui-Won shook her head while looking at us and strode forward without hesitation.

A handful of monkeys hidden in the nooks and crannies of the city were glancing at us.

It certainly didn't feel like a welcoming atmosphere. This world didn't welcome us or even bother to greet us. Forget about a fairy tale, the overall vibe suited a horror novel far better.

Not too long afterwards, we arrived before the Emerald Tower.

Han Su-Yeong was the first to speak up. "It looks like a magic tower."

"Well, an actual wizard is living here, so…"

Although, I couldn't be sure if he was still alive even now.

We approached the entrance and knocked on the door, only to be greeted by a stiff, curt voice of a man.

- State your business.

"We seek an audience with the 'Master of Steel'."

No reply came back. The door remained resolutely shut.

It seemed that I made a slip of tongue somewhere. I quickly recalled the 'Ways of Survival'. What did they say in the 999th turn again?

While I remained engrossed in my thoughts, Jeong Hui-Won suddenly unsheathed her sword and spoke up. "Return Hyeon-Seong-ssi's soul before I split this damn tower in half."

The Status of an Archangel exploded out from her entire figure. And just as the intense flames of [Hellfire] started burning on the Steelsword's blade, the door hesitantly opened up.

[The Emerald Castle is welcoming all of you.]

I wondered if this was fine, but since we didn't have a lot of time, I figured might as well.

Han Su-Yeong had found an ideal opportunity here so she muttered in an impressed voice. "As expected of our Dorothy."

"Shut up. I didn't come here to fool around."

Han Su-Yeong sneaked closer to my side and whispered through the [Midday Tryst].

- Super scary. Is that the power of love?

Jeong Hui-Won was marching forward while her Steelsword drew arcs in the air. She was originally a spirited person, to begin with, but seeing her like this, I couldn't help but admit that her current aura was indeed astonishing.

- I guess so.

The interior of the tower was rather plain and boring. There weren't any eye-catching decorations to speak of, and only the most necessary items were placed here and there. It was like the inside of Yi Hyeon-Seong's military backpack.

We walked for another five minutes or so before a room resembling an audience chamber made its appearance. We opened its doors and entered immediately. Colourful spotlights came to life and a giant, silver-coloured mask floated up in the middle of the chamber. A pair of hollow eyes were now looking at us.

[The , is it.]

The Steel's true voice reverberated within the audience chamber.

I immediately realised that this guy was the 'Master of Steel', the Fable-grade Constellation and Yi Hyeon-Seong's backer. This mask was probably a symbolic item.

"That's correct. Pleasure to make your acquaintance."

[I'm guessing that you're the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

I nodded my head. The silver mask looked at me as if this whole thing was rather annoying. [What is the purpose of your visit here?]

Going straight to the topic, is it? I thought that this was for the better.

"Please return Yi Hyeong-Seong's soul to us. We know that you have the ownership over it."

[That's impossible.]

"Why not?"

[His soul is required to maintain this planet.]

That was completely unexpected. I glanced to my side, only to discover Jeong Hui-Won glaring daggers in my direction.

I quickly followed up. "I'm well aware that sponsorship contracts are usually like this, but regardless of what, Hyeon-Seong-ssi is our comrade. I was under the impression that you liked our story so far?"

[……]

"Besides, doesn't possess more than enough Great Fables? Surely, there isn't a reason to use Hyeon-Seong-ssi's soul as the power source?"

The Fable of 「Wizard of Oz」 was famous enough to be well-known back on Earth, too. Sure, the fame had cooled down a little in recent times, but this story managed to generate a shocking level of popularity throughout the planet once upon a time.

It was that famous on Earth, so how popular would it have been in the ?

So, the lack of a power source simply didn't make any sense at all.

Even then, the 'Master of Steel' remained resolutely stubborn.

[Go back. I can't return his soul.]

Fin.

"If you really require a power source, then why don't we exchange Fables? We can supply you with Fables that can serve as useful replacements."

[I told you to go back.]

As I thought, something was off here. If it was simply about using Yi Hyeon-Seong as a power source, then there shouldn't be a reason to say no to my offer.

"I'm sorry, but we must take his soul back with us. The Final Scenario will soon begin.

Meaning, this is no time for us to worry about your well-being."

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling!]

I unleashed my Status, causing the 'Master of Steel' to speak in a bit of a fluster. [You dare to oppose me inside ??]

Accompanied by a 'Tsu-chuchuchut!' noise, sparks exploded inside the audience chamber. The 'Master of Steel' was a Fable-grade Constellation, but when in , his Status would…

[I've been generous by receiving you lot, yet you…!]

…Be almost on the same level as a Myth-grade Constellation.

Ku-dudududu!!

The whole planet seemingly writhed about violently like a heart repeating the actions of contracting and relaxing.

Han Su-Yeong stared at me with a pale complexion.

- Are you insane, Kim Dok-Ja?! Why are you trying to fight insi…

I began unleashing the Fables next.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

The main Great Fables started their storytelling and the audience chamber quaked as if it'd collapse at any given moment.

I stepped across the violently-rocking floor and walked forward. The 'Master of Steel'

shouted out. [Step back! If you don't, I shall…!]

Yup, thought as much.

There were plenty of opportunities to subdue me, yet this 'Master of Steel' only issued warnings repeatedly without actually doing anything.

It was like dealing with the Cowardly Lion.

I walked straight through the mask and advanced forward to reach the rear-most wall of the audience chamber. The 'Master of Steel' was shouting something at me, but I ignored it all and simply punched the wall, hard.

In the next moment, the silver mask floating around like a hologram disappeared.

"Listen here, monkey."

And I could see a monkey through the wide-open hole in the wall, shivering away in pure fear.

"Where is the real 'Master of Steel'?"

*

A short while later, we managed to get some useful info from the monkey.

Han Su-Yeong spoke first. "Okay, so. The 'Master of Steel' isn't here."

[I-if you do this, the 'Master of Steel' will…]

"Switch off the true voice, now. It doesn't even sound like a proper true voice, anyway."

“…probably forgive you," said the now-dejected monkey.

It was likely that this monkey was a henchman of the real 'Master of Steel'. I wasn't sure why, but this little guy was acting like a Constellation in this place for some reason.

"Hang on, was it you who sent all those indirect messages until now, then?"

"Y-yes, that's right. However, I was accurately conveying the Master of Steel-nim's intentions."

"You were 'conveying' his intentions?"

My question prompted the monkey's gaze to shift towards a corner of the audience chamber. That was where we could see an altar with a Steelsword stabbed into its surface to resemble a cross.

I took an especially closer look at the exterior of the sword.

"Now normally, I can hear the Master's intentions through that altar. But lately, messages from him have stopped arriving, and…”

I reached out to the Steelsword. I felt a certain flinching jolt when I touched it. I had experienced a sensation like this one before.

Although very faint, it was the same sensation I felt back when I came

in contact with a different world-line.

Which meant that the 'Master of Steel' was an existence from another world-line.

…But, that was not possible. As far as I knew, the 'Master of Steel' was Tin Woodman from the 「Wizard of Oz」… Could it be that someone else had appropriated that Constellation Modifier?

While I was stewing inside my thoughts, Han Su-Yeong asked the monkey. "Does the wretched state of your planet have something to do with that?"

"…Well, some part of it, yes. But neglecting maintenance also contributed to the issue, as well. Every Fable is bound to stagnate, after all. It has been a really long time since

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magic has disappeared from , you see. Do you actually know how old the Fable of this place is?"

"Don't know."

"Tourists don't come to anymore. It's already been over three years since the last time the monthly average visitor numbers reached double digits."

The monkey's eyes were dyed in the light of vague reminiscence. As if he was recalling the glory days of yore or something.

"Once upon a time, was the number one theme park in the …"

Jeong Hui-Won frowned deeply. "I don't want to hear about stuff like that. So, are you going to return Hyeon-Seong-ssi's soul or not??"

"W-well, that is a bit…"

"Why not?!"

"The whole reason why we managed to maintain double-digit attendance numbers is due to 'Yi Hyeon-Seong', that's why."

"What are you talking about?"

The monkey hesitated greatly before answering her. "Have you heard the news that lately, the powers of all Great Fables are in decline?"

"Powers of the Great Fables are declining…?"

"It's not just . Many Fables that constitute Great Fables have all entered the path of stagnation similar to 's situation."

"But, why?"

"A certain Fable that has appeared in recent times has begun eating into the percentages of other Fables, you see."

The monkey raised its head and with eyes full of resentment, began glaring at me.

"I'm talking about you people's Fable."

*

In conclusion, we did get something out from the visit to the Emerald Castle. The monkey told us this:

- You can take Yi Hyeon-Seong away. In return, please help us with advertising .

We asked how we could do that, and he replied like this.

- You'll find out when you get to where Yi Hyeon-Seong currently is.

And that was the reason why us, this trio, were standing in this particular place. At some distance away, we could see a Ferris wheel that no longer functioned as well as an ancient, decrepit carousel. It

was the stereotypical sight of a run-down, bankrupt theme park.

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It seemed that was the name of this theme park. In a way, it sounded rather cool.

My problem was with what was written below it.

< >

- Yi Hyeon-Seong 'Memory Experience Centre' now open!

- Find Yi Hyeon-Seong's soul hidden somewhere in the Experience Centre to win a cool, pre-selected prize.

…What the hell was the meaning of this?

We headed to the ticket booth to find a list of prices waiting for us.

* Entrance ticket 4000 Coins

* Free Pass (50% discount) 3000 Coins

This was basically telling us to buy the free pass.

The ticket booth employee asked us.

- How many?

"Three."

- 3000 Coins per Incarnation. 60000 for a Constellation.

…Did I hear him wrong just now?

I became dazed after being on the receiving end of such cruel discrimination for the first time in my life. But then, Jeong Hui-Won

suddenly extended her hand in my direction. "This counts as company expenses, right? We're on the clock, after all."

“…Of course."

"Give me one for Incarnation."

She unhesitantly swiped with the company expenses card and entered the 'Memory Experience Centre' right away. I remained dazed, while Han Su-Yeong stepped past me.

"Excuse me, one more Incar…”

"Hang on."

"What is it now?"

"There is a special discount category."

I pointed at the small notice attached next to the price list.

* Constellation X Incarnation Couple Discount Coupon, now available!

* This is a special couple's discount coupon designed for those Sponsors visiting along with their Incarnations! Make beautiful new memories with your Incarnation and enjoy sweet, relaxing time together!

Han Su-Yeong finished reading the notice and turned to look at me. I nodded my head.

Which prompted her to ask a question.

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"Have you finally lost it?"

"Even if we have enough Coins, I don't have enough to spend in this place."

She glared at me with seething eyes, and as if calculating something in her head, she counted with her fingers for a bit, and finally alternated her gaze between the price list and me.

Eventually, she sighed grandly and asked. "Fine. What will you give me in return?"

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“…What are you two doing??"

Jeong Hui-Won discovered Han Su-Yeong and I, and said that in dismay. But, that was understandable. Because… both of us were sporting an identical pair of wolf-ear headbands right now.

[Applicable item can't be taken off while inside the 'Memory Experience Centre'.]

[Please show off the close bond you share with your Incarnation to other Constellations!]

Han Su-Yeong replied to her in a shameless voice. "I'm working part-time in the dating industry."

"Let's search for Hyeon-Seong-ssi first, shall we?"

According to the monkey, Yi Hyeon-Seong's soul should be wandering around somewhere in this 'Memory Experience Centre'. Not sure why he was roaming around in this place, but…

We had a little bit of time on our hands, so we walked around the 'Memory Experience Centre' with calm minds. I was wondering what exactly this place was, and we soon got to find out.

[Yi Hyeon-Seong, born as a healthy and big baby weighing in at 5.4 kg!]

[Yi Hyeon-Seong, five years old – rescues a friend from bullies!]

This was where we would get to 'experience' his life.

[Only those holding the 'Free Pass' can enter.]

[The chamber's experience will begin once you enter. Will you enter?]

"Does this mean we will get to experience the feelings of a newborn? Who the heck would want to pay money to experience something like that??"

This theme park seemed to be similar in nature to a generalised amusement park. We could enter individual 'Experience Centres' to experience Yi Hyeon-Seong's life through either his eyes or someone near him.

Jeong Hui-Won spoke up. "I guess we really have become famous lately. Someone even came up with a thing like this, too."

"…I'm kinda curious about that one over there."

We became totally entranced and studied the various parts of Yi Hyeon-Seong's life. It felt as if I had really become a Constellation… Hang on, I really was a Constellation, wasn't I?

[Yi Hyeon-Seong, 17 years old – fails in his quest for his first love!]

Jeong Hui-Won stared at this particular 'centre' without saying anything.

So, I naturally had to ask. "… Are you planning to go in?"

"No."

We continued to search for Yi Hyeon-Seong. His soul gave off a unique Fable reaction.

And we could definitely sense that particular reaction nearby, but…

[Yi Hyeon-Seong, encountering the Judge that destroys evil!]

After walking about for a while, we discovered several 'Experience Centres' related to the .

[Pure Steel Yi Hyeon-Seong! With Judge that destroys evil, he…]

Jeong Hui-Won's steps gradually gained pace. We diligently followed after her. However, we still couldn't sense Yi Hyeon-Seong's presence. We looked through a row of the

Experience Centres and turned around to leave, but found someone unexpected behind us. It wasn't the guy we were looking for, though.

"Uh? Ahjussi?"

It was Yi Ji-Hye wearing a fox-ear headband.

“…And why are you here?"

Yi Ji-Hye provided a short explanation after I asked her.

The first part of the tale was about Yu Jung-Hyeok, Yu Sang-Ah, the kids, and her heading to the blacksmith only to be told that the supply of Fable metal had run out.

The second part was about how they walked around disappointed only to coincidentally discover this place.

And finally, the last part regarding how they just couldn't win against the kids pestering them so they bought a family discount to enter… Eh? Family discount?

"What are you fools doing here?"

I looked back and sure enough, Yu Jung-Hyeok and his fox ears were standing there.

He alternated his gaze between me and Han Su-Yeong before throwing out a question.

"Have you regained Yi Hyeon-Seong's soul yet?"

"We came here to find it. Besides, what are you doing here instead of

searching for the Fable metal?"

"The blacksmith was temporarily closed. Apparently, their supply of Fable metal had run out."

I could guess why something like that had happened. Perhaps it was related to the weakening of 's Great Fable.

I saw Yu Sang-Ah waving her hand from afar. I also spotted Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong wearing headbands that reminded me of a dragonfly's wings.

"Eonni! Let's go inside that one next! That one!"

"Oh my, that one's for over 18s, you know."

Somehow, the whole gang had assembled once more.

I figured this was for the best. Since it had come to this, searching for Yi Hyeon-Seong together could save us from further trouble.

It was then that Jeong Hui-Won's voice came from a bit of distance away. "Everyone, please come over here!"

We hurriedly went over to her side. And that's where we discovered a certain Experience Centre with an especially high number of warning signs posted outside compared to the others we've seen so far.

* This Experience Centre can only be entered by persons older than 18 years of age.

* After experiencing the possession, you might suffer from mental anguish due to the severe, harsh treatment.

* Caution should be exercised if South Korean male Incarnations wish to use this centre.

I looked up at the title card for the 'Memory Experience Centre' and spoke to the others. "… Looks like we found him."

There was no doubt about it. The dull-and-slow-moving Fable unique to Yi Hyeon-Seong could definitely be felt from this particular Experience Centre.

He was inside this thing.

I reconfirmed the name of this Experience Centre one more time.

[I lost a shell by mistake.]

Fin.

"Hyeon-Seong-ee will do it right."

"Hey, it's still not too late. Tie the PET bottles to your legs and jump from the third floor."

"Others eventually all serve, anyway. So it's fine. Come back after becoming a man."

Those were pretty common advice given to someone about to be drafted, just like his life. A life too busy chasing after what everyone else was doing.

Just like everyone else, he had to sing 'Private's Letter', and without a best friend nor a girlfriend to bid him goodbye, walked into the recruit training centre.

"53rd trainee."

"53rd trainee Yi Hyeon-Seong, here!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong's early military life wasn't so bad. Thanks to his naturally-tall height and well-built muscles, he even got recommended to become a commander-in-training, too. He would've even graduated the training course with citations were it not for messing up the commander's pledge repeatedly.

"Trainee, do you think the words of your training supervisor are a joke??"

He realised it from an early age that he was rather slow-witted. Didn't matter what it was, he learned it later than everyone else, and he was also rather slow in analysing his situations, too.

Even then, he managed to live on relatively fine all because there were some people who appreciated his relaxed and honest personality. Unfortunately, there were no such people to be found in the army.

"Just why do I have to be paired with him in the buddy system…"

"A big freaking body and nothing much besides…"

Yi Hyeon-Seong endured the trainee life even as he was subjected to various insults and ridicules.

By the time he completed the training course, he became someone who could finish showering in five minutes or pack his sleeping gear in less than one minute.

Not too long afterwards, the moment he'd be dispatched to a base had arrived. This was the moment he had been waiting forever since he got drafted.

- Giving away sweet tips to those about to join the army. Follow these

instructions after you get to a base. (HOT!) [812]

From the shoe inserts to use during prolonged marching, to being loved by his seniors after he got assigned to a base – the so-called 'sweet tips' on the internet he diligently studied the day before joining the military was his only hope.

His fellow trainees left one by one.

He was the last one remaining. And the person to come fetch him was a person named

'Sergeant first class Jeong'. A steel hat deeply pressed on this person's head obscured their face.

"You, come with me."

While he rode on the noisy military truck headed to somewhere, Yi Hyeon-Seong thought about his life one more time. He thought about the next couple of years ahead, as well as the trials and tribulations waiting for him.

His new army base was in the middle of a small mountain. And so, this would be where his army life would begin proper. He finished the simple registration process for a new recruit with the aid of a manager and headed off to the barracks.

And the moment he opened the building's door wide…

- You must definitely do this.

Yi Hyeon-Seong did exactly what the internet tip said he should do.

"Accept your newbie-!!"

If this was a regular army, his army life would've come to an end right there. That was, if this was the regular army base.

As his duffel bag was flung in the air, everything around him slowed down to a crawl, like a slow-motion video. The bag slowly came undone mid-air; unwashed army-issue underwears, toilet papers, and soap he used back in the boot camp very slowly scattered in the air. Also, Yi Hyeon-Seong's own triumphant, confident face, filled with the hope of his upcoming army life…

As this scene resembling a tragedy-filled movie played out, someone suddenly asked a question.

-… What should we do?

That elicited a reply from someone else.

- Nothing much. This is who Hyeon-Seong-ssi is. In any case, let's accept this reality.

The hardcore treatment last time didn't work, so this time, let's go with the promised

'progressive army' concept…

- Stop being noisy and get it started already, Kim Dok-Ja.

-… Well then, let's start over again!

And then, the scene began moving forward again.

Splat!

His duffel bag shooting forward seemingly out of a cannon crashed on the floor like a real cannon shell.

The atmosphere became icy in an instant as if someone poured cold water. And the glares of his seniors belatedly stabbed into Yi Hyeon-Seong. Cold sweat trickled down his back. Could it be… that he made a mistake?

Right next moment.

Sergeant first class Jeong grinned brightly and clapped hands. "Begin your smile

exercise, now! Hahahaha! Wow, now that was funny! My first time seeing such a refreshing debut!"

That prompted the seniors in the barracks to give him a standing ovation as if they were waiting for this moment.

"Rookie-nim, really well done!"

"Wonderful job."

As the sounds of hands clapping resounded out, Yi Hyeon-Seong grew even more puzzled, but still, his triumphant air returned. The 'sweet' tip had been right.

Sergeant first class Jeong spoke towards the soldiers. "Jung-Hyeok-ee, you're his direct senior, so take good care of this guy."

“…Understood."

The noisy atmosphere continued on. In the meantime, Yi Hyeon-Seong discovered a senior tidying up his scattered belongings on the floor for him.

His uniform was perfectly straight, the light in his eyes sharp and fierce, and his face was like a fine sculpture. His chest was home to the army service ribbon of Private first class, and the name tag of 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.

'Ah, so this person is my direct senior.'

It was then, this senior's scary eyes landed on Yi Hyeon-Seong.

"I, I'm Private second class, Yi Hyeon-Seong!!"

"Your spot is this way."

His stuff had been gathered up in the blink of an eye and was placed in the locker.

Other seniors looked impressed as if they were expecting it.

"Newbie, watch and learn from him. Jung-Hyeok-ee is our base's ace, you see?"

Just from looking at the atmosphere of his seniors, he could already tell what kind of a being his direct senior was. That perfectly-set beret, that perfectly-set bedding – it

was as if everywhere this person touched sparkled brightly. If he could carry on his army life just like this senior…

"What's this? We have a newbie?"

It was at this moment that a cheerful voice came from the entrance. A man's face caked in sweat as if he was returning from a hard day's work was there.

Yi Hyeon-Seong confirmed the rank of sergeant as the man brushed past him and he quickly performed a military salute. "Loyalty!"

"Ah, ah. Don't be so tense. It's fine." The sergeant studied Yi Hyeon-Seong's face before breaking out in a grin. He then shifted his gaze towards Private first-class Yu Jung-Hyeok. "Looks like our Jung-Hyeok-ee's military life is about to get a whole lot easier now? He's already got himself a direct junior and all."

The complexion of the man snickering away was far too pale for a soldier. But, why was this? The moment he saw this man, Yi Hyeon-Seong felt this sensation of the deepest corner of his heart ache a little.

Soldiers confirmed the face of the man and shouted out.

"Sergeant Kim Dok-Ja-nim! Good to see you back from your hard day's work!"

"Alright, men. By the way, why isn't Jung-Hyeok-ee greeting me?"

“…Wel… come… back…”

Private first-class Yu Jung-Hyeok trembled visibly, his complexion ashen-white. It felt as his scowl didn't form out of fear, but more like out of sheer rage, instead Sergeant Kim Dok-Ja shrugged his shoulders after observing his reaction, then spoke up. "Welcome to our squad, Yi Hyeon-Seong."

"I'm Private second class, Yi Hyeon-Seong! Sir!"

This was the first meeting between Yi Hyeon-Seong and the squad leader Kim Dok-Ja.

…As far as the former's memories were concerned, that was.

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About two weeks went by since he was shipped out.

During that time, Yi Hyeon-Seong got to learn various things about this base. For instance, about Sergeant Kim Dok-Ja, the de facto authority in the squad he belonged to.

"Got it? If that fool Yu Jung-Hyeok does something out of line, you must tell me right away."

"P-Private second class, Yi Hyeon-Seong!! There's no such thing!"

"Nope, listen. Such a thing will happen. You already suffered plenty of times, you see."

“…I think I misheard you, sir?"

And then, Private first class Yu Jung-Hyeok who always stayed by his side and led by example, and also glared at Sergeant Kim Dok-Ja every single chance he got.

"Polish your military boots this way."

"P-private second class, Yi Hyeon-Seong! I'll work hard!!"

"Working hard has no meaning. The important thing is doing it right."

Also, medical officer Lieutenant Yu, who periodically showed up to do health check-ups.

"Mm, you have a bruising on your leg… Should I just have you discharged for health reasons?"

"P-Private second class Yi Hyeon-Seong!! I'll be fine!"

"Then, should I stitch you up? I'm pretty good with needles."

Then, Sergeant first class Jeong who seemed to be disinterested yet also meticulous, and sometimes looking at Yi Hyeon-Seong with a saddened expression.

“…How is it? You good?"

"P-Private second class, Yi Hyeon-Seong!! I'll do my utmost best!!"

"It's fine if you don't. You always try your best anyway."

…Everyone here, they all had something weird about them.

"For the sake of establishing the culture of progressive army environment!"

However, if he were to pick the strangest person out of them all, then…

"All soldiers must read webnovels during their downtime. Reading webnovels is the alpha and omega of a productive downtime."

…It was none other than the squad commander, Captain Han.

"That's enough! It's your downtime now! All of you, read webnovels."

"Lo! Yalty!"

That's how Yi Hyeon-Seong's dream-like soldier life began. However, he had no idea.

[Currently, is challenging the Memory Experience Centre's 'I lost a shell by mistake'.]

[Applicable Experience Centre's difficulty is rated hardest.]

[Number of attempts to clear it is currently 3.]

He had no idea that this soldier life wasn't his first time.

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It didn't really need to be explained, but the total number of people participating in this scenario was five. Yu Jung-Hyeok, Yu Sang-Ah, Jeong Hui-Won, Han Su-Yeong, and myself.

On a side note, the hidden scenario we got was this.

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Type: Hidden

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Incarnation 'Yi Hyeon-Seong' is trapped in his own memories. Resolve his trauma and rescue him from his memories.

Time limit: ???

Reward: Yi Hyeon-Seong's return, possibility of acquiring main prize item related to strengthening of 's profile.

Failure: Acceleration of 's destruction.

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What a nonsensical scenario it was. The time limit shown as question marks already put us in a bit of spot, yet the clear condition and the failure penalty were even more disconcerting.

Sergeant first class Jeong Hui-Won-nim… no, hang on, just Jeong Hui-Won, asked a question. "Sergeant Kim Dok-Ja."

"Yes?"

"Let's forget about the rest for now. But this, why would be destroyed if we fail?"

"There are two possible theories. One, that's how low the 's profile has fallen, and… two, it could mean some kind of physical danger."

Along with a 'Boom!!' a slender ripple-like thing spread from the far side of the skies.

I recalled the Nebulas that chased us to this place. It was possible that they had begun their invasion in earnest. If that was the case, then we didn't have all that much time.

Maybe he heard the rippling noise, Yi Hyeon-Seong and his pale-white complexion quickly ran towards us from afar.

"Sergeant Kim!!"

"Yeah, Hyeon-Seong-ah."

"Looks like North Korea is attacking us!!"

"Nah, it's alright. Go take a break."

"Loyalty!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong seemed lost as to what to do next, but eventually headed off to the corner of the base and began practising national military gymnastics exercise he hadn't mastered yet.

Jeong Hui-Won watched him and muttered to me. "Can Hyeon-Seong-ssi really return to us?"

"I'm not sure. But we must try."

This was already our third attempt.

The first try was a failure as many of my companions didn't know much about the army (I was the only person who served among our group, actually) and the second try ended up as another failure all thanks to Yu Jung-Hyeok's hardcore treatment.

Yu Jung-Hyeok forming a scowl next to us piped up. "Frustrating. Yi Hyeon-Seong must be put through his paces so that he can wake up faster. Have you forgotten about the events of Kaixenix?"

"We already tried that during our second try."

"I can do better given another chance."

"You should know better than anyone that's not true."

"…"

"You know that saving someone else is never that easy."

This Yu Jung-Hyeok had gone through the third regression turn… or, possibly even the

1864th turn. So, he should know it even if I didn't bring it up.

"Yi Hyeon-Seong! The order of your exercise is wrong!"

…Or, it's possible that he didn't know.

Yu Jung-Hyeok strode towards the frightened Yi Hyeon-Seong in big steps.

I watched the two of them doing the military gymnastics exercise side by side and murmured to Jeong Hui-Won. "I think staying here for too long will be bad for us. Even Yu Jung-Hyeok's acting strange."

“…He is?"

"He's never served in the army, yet he's adapting to it just too well."

I watched Yu Jung-Hyeok perform the gymnastics exercise with near-religious zeal.

There was an event during the 144th regression turn where he wrongly received a transfusion of Yi Hyeon-Seong's 'Military Fable' and went insane.

If more time went by inside here and yet another Fable like 「Mad Soldier Yu Jung-Hyeok」 was created in the process, then…

Jeong Hui-Won replied. "Isn't it a good thing that he's adapting really well?"

"Yes, he's adapting well, but the problem is with how poorly he's treating me, his senior in rank. The military nowadays have become really soft, I have to say. Back when I was in the army…”

"Dok-Ja-ssi, you're just sour that Jung-Hyeok-ssi never served, right? I mean, he was exempted, wasn't he?"

I replied to her in a calm manner. "… In any case, the situation isn't so bad if we exclude that part. Just by us being here, the planet 's profile is rising up, after all."

[Currently, a large number of Constellations are paying attention to the applicable scenario!]

Maybe the rumour of creating yet another bizarre Fable had made rounds out there because visitors to Biyu's channel had increased.

I couldn't be sure, but those Nebulas targetting us right outside the planet were probably watching us right now. If they couldn't attack us immediately, then taking advantage of the situation would be a smart thing to do.

[Many Constellations have entered the applicable channel!]

[Planet 's fame is spreading far and wide!]

[Brand new Fable related to Incarnation 'Yi Hyeon-Seong' is germinating!]

The strange thing was, the newly-entering Constellations weren't the people that I knew of. Uriel, the Great Sage, the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, Goreyo's First Sword…

as if they were the tidewater receding away, all the Modifiers I was glad to see were nowhere to be found.

An ominous foreboding crept up in my mind. Did something happen to them?

[Portion of Constellations are eagerly waiting for Incarnation 'Yi Hyeon-Seong's return!]

I need to conclude this scenario quickly so that I may get to find out what's going on, but…

"Is there really a need to clear it, though?"

"Pardon?"

Jeong Hui-Won didn't reply and stared in Yi Hyeon-Seong's direction. While under the guidance of Yu Jung-Hyeok, he was continuing to perform the exercise routine as sweat trickled down his face. Maybe he got the order right this time because Yu Jung-Hyeok could be seen nodding his head. Yi Hyeon-Seong looked elated.

[Character 'Yi Hyeon-Seong' is feeling happy!]

"Because he always harped on about manual this and manual that, I thought that Hyeon-Seong-ssi was a natural-born soldier."

I agreed with her assessment, so I ended up nodding along.

Yi Hyeon-Seong's backstory wasn't discussed in-depth within the Ways of Survival.

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The man named Yi Hyeon-Seong, who lived and died by the rules of the field manual.

But such a man was in reality, as far removed from those manuals than anything else out there.

This world was where Yi Hyeon-Seong's manual had come to life.

[Character 'Yi Hyeon-Seong' likes this place.]

Jeong Hui-Won smiled powerlessly and spoke in a sorrowful voice. "In a way, taking him away from here could be us being greedy."

Certainly, Yi Hyeon-Seong might be happier by remaining in . Instead of wandering inside the hellish scenarios, spending simple, comfortable time within his memories could be a better life for him.

Ku-gugugu…

It was then, we heard yet another deafening boom.

Just as I was about to exchange glances with Jeong Hui-Won, several channel messages floated up one after the other.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has entered the channel!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' has entered the channel!]

[Constellation, 'Goreyo's First Sword' has entered the channel!]

All those vanished Constellations had returned to the channel at once. Just before I could ask what happened, though…

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is trying to warn you of…!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[All indirect messaging within the channel has been restricted.]

…The indirect message was cut off.

I raised my head to discover Biyu forming a surprised expression. Obviously, this

wasn't her doing, so… In that case, who?

Another boom spread out from the skies. Accompanying the noise akin to a giant drum being torn apart, the heavens far away began cracking up.

Craaaaack.

“…Dok-Ja-ssi."

Something was going wrong here.

Fin.

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Uriel's mood wasn't so good.

- Where are you, our Biyu?

The previous Fables of were currently on the Star Stream's broadcasts, yet she couldn't pay attention to them. That couldn't be helped, though.

The thoughts of previously-laid-back Uriel had become rather complicated what with everything that happened recently. The deciding factor was her running into the version of herself from the 999th worldline and receiving a portion of her memories.

「I'm your only ally, Yu Jung-Hyeok. I shall definitely end the scenarios and avenge you.」

She knew that versions of herself existed in other worldlines. But, she didn't expect the experiences of knowing it and meeting one would be this different.

The 999th regression turn's worldline.

Just what exactly did she do in that world?

[…Urgh, so irritating. I'm not curious about the stories of another worldline. Trying to follow the stories of my kids alone is plenty hard enough already.]

Uriel grumbled while hugging her head.

Besides, the 's atmosphere seemed rather unsettled lately. As the Final Scenario approached, this vague, strange sense of tension circulated among all the Constellations. So much so that a groundless rumour of the Bureau abandoning this worldline was doing the rounds, too.

[has summoned the Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'-nim!]

[Will you answer the summon?]

Uriel's head shot up after hearing that sudden message.

…Why, with such a timing?

She pondered for a moment, before tapping on the 'confirm' button. When she did, she was transported to another location along with blinding rays of light.

[Transmission is complete.]

The place she arrived in was an unfamiliar empty field. Besides her, other Constellations had arrived there before her.

[What's this, Gabriel? You're also here?]

[The Bureau will spam you with messages if you refuse their call, after all.]

She looked around and spotted several dozen Constellations gathering here. Just like her, many seemed to be curious about why they had been summoned. Even if the Bureau was a bunch of thugs, they wouldn't summon them here without a reason.

Not only that, she recognised a few familiar faces, too. Such as a short height with bandages tightly wrapped around in one arm…

[Oh my gosh, oh my gosh! Isn't this our little Flame Dragon?!]

Uriel dashed towards the figure of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon and performed a head-lock.

[Keuk! An enemy's sneak attack?!]

[It's me, your Archangel noonim.]

[Release me at once!]

Abyssal Dragon freaked out and struggled inside Uriel's 'embrace'.

While watching that spectacle unfold, Gabriel muttered out. [… Uriel, that guy is an

'Absolute Evil', you know.]

[Who cares. is destroyed, anyway. We should be friends with one another.]

The Nebula was almost completely wiped out at the end of the prior 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. Most of the once-powerful Archangel army was decimated, and the only Archangels that could move were Uriel and Gabriel.

The former stopped thinking about the bitter matters and scanned her vicinity. [Hey, that's the Goryeo's First Sword, isn't he?]

Not only him, but also the Korean Peninsula's Constellations that included 'Bald General of Justice', 'First Sorcerer of Joseon', and even 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol'; Nebulas such as , plus a host of Constellations and even Surya could be seen.

Uriel's eyes moved about even more urgently than before.

The more she spotted familiar Constellations, the greater the foreboding grew. Every Constellation gathered here, they all had one thing in common.

The Abyssal Dragon finally managed to extract himself from her grasp and muttered loudly. [… Everyone here is from Kim Dok-Ja's channel.]

He was right; Everyone gathered here, they…

…Pah-chuchut!

Right then, Uriel's perception picked up on the movement of a threatening Status.

Beings were surrounding this empty field. Each and every one of them possessed more than enough Status to almost rival a Fable-grade Constellation.

Uriel and her quick wits immediately saw through their identity. [… ,

, and even . What is the meaning of this? To think that you lot with plenty of bad blood between you would unite like this.]

Uriel spoke up, feeling slightly tense. Even if it was her, fighting off against this many Fable-grade Constellations was asking for too much. Not only that…

[Even a bum-heavy geezer, too… What brings an existence from the 'Final Scenario'

here?]

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She was sure of it; the goosebumps rising up on her arms were proof of the incredibly powerful being's existence hiding nearby.

Even if was vast, there were only a handful of beings possessing this level of Status. She glanced to the side and noticed that even the 'Abyssal Dragon' was making a visibly hardened expression.

There was no doubt – this creature, it was…

[Is everyone here?]

…A true Myth-grade Constellation.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The moment that true voice rang out, the surrounding air suddenly

changed. It felt as if the oxygen floating around was ignited instantly.

The sensation was so strong that the Constellations near her wobbled unsteadily, while even Uriel, renowned for her high resistance to fire, couldn't help but frown deeply for a moment there.

…Why was a 'Myth-grade Constellation' here?

With the very rare exceptions like the King of the Underworld, Metatron or the Great Sage, the majority of 'Myth-grade Constellations' didn't interfere with the matters of lower-ranked scenarios. Because they were beings that had already completed their

'Conclusion' and placed their names on the candidate list for the 'One Single Fable'.

They had already reached the Final Scenario, and their Fables had been guaranteed.

[Looks like the monkey b*stard and the King of the Underworld are the only absentees.

However, it's not possible to delay any further, so I shall start with the explanation.]

[Hold up!]

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun' is looking at 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

The moment she met that gaze, Uriel realised who the owner of that true voice was.

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There were many 'suns' to be found within the . However, suns that occupied the centre of the universe were extremely rare even among them. Especially so, if it was an existence that occupied the 'midday' smack-bang in the middle of time itself…

[God of the Sun, Ra. Did you summon us here?]

He was none other than Ra, the top Constellation of the great Nebula,
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[Correct.]

[How odd. I thought that the 'Bureau' called us here?]

Ra didn't reply to her.

Actually, Uriel could sense a presence of Great Dokkaebi among all the others surrounding her. She decided to calmly respond for now. If that side really chose to align themselves with the Bureau even at the exorbitant loss of their Probability, then this situation couldn't be described as good at all.

[Okay, so. Shall we hear what's so important that you're even willing to expose your cosy relationship with the Bureau?]

[I've summoned you here because of the 'Final Scenario'. Soon, the 'One Single Fable'

will be chosen. Meaning, the story that will represent this worldline will be decided.]

The One Single Fable.

There was not one Constellation present that didn't know what that was. Even the

they had been watching until now was a Nebula creating their own One Single Fable, after all.

[Okay? What's that got to do with us?]

[Most of you have not earned the right of the 'Final Scenario'. However, it'll be a different story if you side with me. I shall take you to the 'Final Scenario'. Meaning, I shall give you an opportunity to place your Modifiers on the 'One Single Fable'.]

That proposition caused the eyes of a few Constellations to rock visibly. Most of them were unaffiliated Historical Figure-grades.

Uriel observed Ra for a moment there before breaking out in a smirk. [What the hell, that's it? It wasn't anything important, so if you're done talking, I'm leaving.]

She turned around, but couldn't take another step. An incredibly powerful Status had rooted her to the spot.

[…What's the meaning of this?]

[I haven't finished talking yet.]

[But, I can already guess what you're about to say without hearing it?]

Uriel's true voice carried a sharp edge. Only the Constellations from the channel BY-9158 and not any others were brought here. And the one who gathered them was none other than the top Constellation of .

[You're about to propose that we attack the , right?]

For a very short moment there, silence dominated the proceedings.

[…Why do you think that?]

[Because they earned the qualification of the 'Final Scenario', that's why. And eliminating them naturally would lead to one of the strongest candidates for the 'One Single Fable' exiting the picture.]

Visible turmoil spread among the Constellations. Uriel sensed the Statuses of the Constellations surrounding them get agitated as well.

She snorted derisively. [Really now, you lot called Constellations just don't change even until the end, no? And also, Ra. You have already reached the Final Scenario, so interfering in the lower scenario like this is really petty, you know. Zeus, and even you…]

[…]

[Are you by any chance worried about your kids? You angry that your offsprings that inherited your Fable couldn't win against fledgling Nebula and failed to become the candidates of the 'One Final Fable', and…]

There was an incredible explosion, and Uriel's figure was buried deep into the ground.

As she spat out a slew of expletives, Ra's true voice entered her ears.

[Fu■, what the hell…]

[Indeed, you're correct. This is the rage of a parent who didn't educate his children properly. This is the righteous rage of a parent who couldn't sit still and watch his children's future go astray because of pathetic losers who gave up on their Conclusions, and a little Nebula not even a decade old.]

As if she was already expecting that, Uriel shouted back. [And you finally reveal your true colours. Sorry, but there are no Constellations here who will side with your kids.

Looks like you don't know whose channel we're subscribers of.]

The Abyssal Dragon and Gabriel reached out and helped Uriel out of the crater. Behind them, the Korean Peninsula's Constellations, including Goryeo's First Sword and Bald General, were nodding their heads.

Uriel felt this inexplicable sense of contentment after meeting their gazes. Right now, here in this place, folks that cheered on someone's Fable in one heart had gathered.

From the start of the first scenario, the 'proof of credentials', all the way to the 'Final Scenario' where the fate of the worldline was to be decided.

Uriel couldn't be certain that everyone here thought the same as her. However, without a doubt, someone among these people must've loved 's Fable more than their own. Just like she did.

[And that is why you're all losers.]

[What?]

[Have you all lost yourselves to voyeurism and forgotten that you are also a part of the scenario?]

In the next moment, a powerful storm of Probability's aftermath whipped about and a certain figure made an entrance.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

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It was a doll with an exterior of steel. A Fable-grade Constellation riddled with wounds was bound by the sturdy ring of light.

[This fool had been supporting a stupid Fable, just like you have.]

Uriel dazedly stared at this Constellation. She had never met this guy before, yet the moment he appeared, she could tell who he might be. Not only that, she had exchanged several indirect messages with him in the past, too.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', is shrinking back from pain.]

The Master of Steel. He was the Incarnation 'Yi Hyeon-Seong's' Sponsor.

Ra's laughter could be heard next. [He would have been safe if he remained quietly back in , yet this fool got in touch with an existence from another worldline, hoping to aid that stupid Fable.]

[Just what the hell are you…!]

[You all do not have a choice. Either you help us put an end to 's Fable, or…]

Along with those words, the rings of light binding the Master of Steel's body began tightening. He thrashed in pain but still stared straight at Uriel.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', says that his death today has no meaning.]

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', announces that his Fable and Modifier have been succeeded by someone else!]

The ring was getting tighter and tighter. Uriel hurriedly moved.

And then…

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', asks you not to give up on that story.]

Squeeze!!

The Master of Steel's body got crushed without any resistance whatsoever, and Fables exploded out from his body. It was truly a meaningless death of a Fable-grade

Constellation.

Everyone from the same channel watched that spectacle as if they were frozen to the spot.

In front of a planet's death, Ra continued to speak. [Or, die like this one.]

Along with a madness-filled roar, Uriel unleashed her Status in full.

< Episode 88. Myth-grade Constellation (1)> Fin.

Ku-gugugugu!

Like a breaking glass, the sky above cracked apart with black lines running through it.

Yi Hyeon-Seong stared at the heavens filling up with rifts and asked me. "Sergeant Kim Dok-Ja-nim? Are we really going to be alright?"

"…"

I too had to look up after listening to him. The world seemed to be crumbling down.

The reason for that was clear – someone was attacking from the outside. Not just anyone, but incredibly powerful beings, no less.

I turned back and discovered my companions looking at me; Yu Jung-Hyeok, Han Su-Yeong, Yu Sang-Ah, Jeong Hui-Won…

I didn't have to say it, but we already knew what our choice would be.

"It'll be fine. Do you think I'm a sergeant just for a show? Don't worry about a thing."

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The sky was breaking down. Yet, how could he say it was all fine?

Yi Hyeon-Seong couldn't quite understand it. Was the military originally like this?

「Kim Dok-Ja simply smiled quietly.」

A calm, collected smile floated upon his face.

Sergeant Kim Dok-Ja would only say this. "Even the squad leader will tell you it's fine."

Indeed, the squad leader really did gather the soldiers in the training ground a short while later and began her speech.

She might be small-statured, but still, was overflowing with charisma. With an unreadable expression on her face, she scanned the rest of the troops and opened her mouth. "Your squad leader, me, is really disappointed in you."

That unexpected opening caused the soldiers to tense up.

"You have not read webnovels during your downtime."

Yi Hyeon-Seong inwardly flinched. It was true. Even yesterday, he didn't read webnovels during his break but practised the military gymnastics routine with Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"And so, this squad leader is planning to leave this base."

Yi Hyeon-Seong became stupefied by that unexpected declaration.

…She was leaving? Hushed murmurs could be heard coming from here and there.

"And Yi Hyeon-Seong."

When he regained his wits, she was already beside him, her hand resting on his shoulder.

"Private second class Yi Hyeon-Seong, ma'am!"

This would be his first time seeing her up close. Her name and rank could be seen on top of her neatly arranged uniform.

Captain Han Su-Yeong – that was her rank, and her name.

「"How long are you planning to stay dazed? You better start moving! You wish to see Kim Dok-Ja kicking the bucket?"」

Why was this? For a moment there, a stinging pain accompanied a set of strange memories brushing past his mind.

What was that just now…?

"Look, you're stupefied again."

"P-Private second class Yi Hyeon-Seong!"

The squad leader stared at him with unreadable eyes before lightly patted him on his cheek. "You better read more books, okay? You're slow, so you simply have to read lots more books. You'll survive for longer that way."

Squad leader Han Su-Yeong left behind indecipherable words and left the base.

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Two days after Captain Han Su-Yeong left.

The cracks in the skies were growing larger. It was like seeing the first signs of a world coming to an end.

"Yi Hyeon-Seong, have you memorised the exercise routine yet?"

He looked behind to discover Private first-class Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"Private second class Yi Hyeon-Seong! I've memorised everything!"

"You've filled up the army-issue canteen, too?"

"I've filled it up with exactly two litres!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong felt a bit scared by that pair of sharp, angry eyes. He

hadn't made any mistakes, yet they remained critical.

"What about the barracks code of conduct?"

"P-Private second class Yi Hyeon-Seong!! T-that, I haven't…!"

The moment he said that, he inwardly went, oops, I'll get scolded again. He swallowed nervously and just as he tried to squeeze his eyes shut, heard Yu Jung-Hyeok's voice.

"You should be able to memorise it soon. It's not that long, anyway."

“…Pardon? Ah, you must've heard me wrong. No, I have not…!"

What on earth was going on here? He made two consecutive mistakes just now, yet Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't criticise him.

Not only that, those scary eyes were no longer angry when looking back at Yi Hyeon-Seong.

"I will be shipping out tomorrow."

“…I don't quite follow, senior?"

"Yi Hyeon-Seong, you can't refer to the field manual on everything. You won't find a senior willing to aid you every single time."

Why was this?

Why did Private first-class Yu Jung-Hyeok's back turning around to leave feel so familiar to him?

"There will come a time when you must make a choice not found within the manual."

Those were the last words left behind by the Private first-class Yu Jung-Hyeok.

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Members of the squad began disappearing one by one. First, it was Captain Han Su-Yeong, Private first class Yu Jung-Hyeok, followed by Lieutenant Yu Sang-Ah. When he regained his wits, the non-commissioned officer, Sergeant first class Jeong Hui-Won had become the squad's top presiding commander. (Even though the situation made no sense, Yi Hyeon-Seong told himself it couldn't be helped because it was emergency.) Yi Hyeon-Seong's daily tasks after performing the morning and evening roll call were to check the base's infrastructure or accompany Sergeant Kim Dok-Ja to the barracks'

library.

"The military nowadays even stock wuxia novels? Wow, this is a really old book, too."

Kim Dok-Ja loved books. Actually, it went beyond a simple love affair – he was the kind of a man who spent the whole day reading books.

Yi Hyeon-Seong would sit next to him and quietly observe him excitedly flip the pages.

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"Don't you want to read, too?"

"Uh, no, I, I'm…"

Before Yi Hyeon-Seong could reply, yet another boom spread out from the sky.

Kim Dok-Ja's expression faintly hardened.

When the boom was heard for the first time four days ago, Captain Han Su-Yeong went away, and after the second boom two days ago, Private first class Yu Jung-Hyeok disappeared next.

Yi Hyeon-Seong grew restless.

"Kim Dok-Ja Sergeant-nim."

"Ng?"

"By any chance, are you also leaving, sir?"

People were leaving him behind. He was continuously losing something.

Kim Dok-Ja smirked softly. "Probably. I'm a sergeant already. I gotta get discharged soon. I'm definitely not planning to make a career out of this place."

“…I see."

"You also want to get out of here as soon as possible, right?"

Yi Hyeon-Seong was about to reply with, "Yes, I do", but then, his eyes suddenly caught the sight of barbed-wire fences outside the windows. They looked so sturdy and intimidating.

Why did he feel this, though? He felt fearful of going outside those fences.

"I…”

If he carelessly went beyond the fences, he'd definitely get hurt. However, they would become barriers protecting him as long as he stayed inside.

When he thought like that, he felt his heart calm down.

The skies were falling. There was an unknown world outside where code of conduct for living in barracks or the military gymnastics exercise held no meaning.

He shifted his gaze back to discover Kim Dok-Ja staring at him. The

sergeant's lips bobbed up and down as if he wanted to say something, but then, a sly grin suddenly formed on his lips. "Hey, if you wish to leave, you better read more books, man."

“…Will reading lots of books reduce the period of active service?"

Kim Dok-Ja's lips twitched after hearing that question. "Reading a book and writing a report on it might be enough to get you a vacation."

A book report?

"See, there will be a book report contest being held within our division. Read that and apply for it. If yours get picked, you'll get time-off as a prize."

The noticeboard Kim Dok-Ja pointed at had a poster advertising the army's book report contest. Yi Hyeon-Seong learned for the first time that such a thing existed.

Ah, so it was true, this book report thing. If he wrote that, he'd be able to earn some time off the base.

"When you're finished, you gotta let me read it, okay?"

It was after the following morning's roll call that sergeant Kim Dok-Ja had vanished.

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"It's only us two remaining, so who cares about daily tasks?"

Sergeant first class Jeong Hui-Won grumbled loudly.

Yi Hyeon-Seong smiled sheepishly and pulled out weeds growing near the base. "Well, we don't know what might happen, ma'am. The squad leader might suddenly return, and…”

Jeong Hui-Won sat on a bench and while resting her chins on her hands, watched Yi

Hyeon-Seong as if he was a mysterious new lifeform.

"Do you like this place?"

The usual Sergeant first class wouldn't have used such a tone of voice. However, her voice still managed to elicit this inexplicable sense of longing in him.

Maybe it was that longing allowing him to reply honestly right away.

"It's neither like or dislike, ma'am."

A place that he neither liked or disliked. That was exactly what Yi Hyeon-Seong's impression on the 'military' was.

"Except that, I don't have to think about anything while I'm here."

That's right – that was the reason why he chose the army.

While he was here, he could forget about the outside world. Employment, enrolment, gazes of others, issues of the outside world, family affairs, dilemmas he could never solve no matter what he did.

"…But then, I've been thinking lately that I kind of like it here."

What did he exactly like about this place, anyway? He couldn't describe it properly.

「"I like you."」

And why did his heart ache so much?

Sergeant first class Jeong Hui-Won looking straight at him suddenly spoke up. "In that case, you stay here, Yi Hyeon-Seong. Wait for us until we come back."

He couldn't reply with "I didn't quite catch you".

Because he simply couldn't mishear what she was saying.

"We'll protect your world."

The moment he wanted to say something, blinding rays of light

poured down from the

sky, and the Sergeant first class Jeong Hui-Won disappeared from his view.

Ku-dududu…

Before anyone had noticed it, the cracks in the skies had already swallowed up half of the heavens.

And so, Yi Hyeon-Seong became alone.

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Just what am I doing?

Is this place really an army base?

The army that I knew is…

Yi Hyeon-Seong repeated his daily tasks and continued to protect the base with no one in it. He woke up at the fixed time, did his roll call, and did the military gymnastics routine. After that, he finished disciplining his mind and began his daily tasks.

However, he had no more things to do now. He even finished pulling out all the weeds found in the base yesterday.

“…The book report."

He belatedly recalled Kim Dok-Ja's words.

He was told to write a report. To read a book, and write his report on it.

Yi Hyeon-Seong went up to the barracks' library. As if to let the world know that Kim Dok-Ja used to be here, there was a pile of books gathered up on that spot.

He reached out to the book on top of that pile, all the while sensing this strange feeling.

The book itself was a familiar one.

「The Wizard of Oz, ver. 999」

Even he had heard of this book's name from somewhere. However, he had never read it before. Yi Hyeon-Seong flipped the cover open and began reading the first sentence.

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「The tin soldier was scared of having a heart.」

A tin soldier, was it? It must've been the Wizard of Oz's protagonist. He continued to flip through the pages.

「The first comrade the tin soldier met was a really scary man. The tin soldier called him 'Captain'.」

The moment he read that line, his head pulsed in pain. Captain?

「The tin soldier then became comrades with a beautiful angel. When that angel became angry, she'd often morph into a devil.」

For some reason, his heart ached when he read those lines.

「The tin soldier became comrades with a warrior wearing thick armour. The warrior used his own sword to test out the tin soldier's strength now and then.」

Why, why did it feel like this description would come to life right before his eyes at any second?

「The tin soldier became comrades with a dragon spitting out fearsome flames. The dragon sometimes acted like a nuisance, too.」

But, I've never met an existence like that before?

「And then, a demon king coming from another world stole away what was most precious to them.」

Every time he read a sentence, all sorts of chaotic scenes and screams flitted in and out of his vision. He was unfamiliar with those spectacles. Even then, Yi Hyeon-Seong's entire body shivered.

He couldn't understand it. He didn't get what this story was about.

He simply didn't get what the author was trying to convey.

Worse still, he couldn't understand why tears were welling up in his eyes.

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「And at the end of this story, the tin soldier realised what the aching in his heart was.」

「That aching eventually became his heart.」

As soon as he read that line, Yi Hyeon-Seong recalled it.

I too once had comrades like them.

「"I'd love to hear your story, Hyeon-Seong-ssi, when all these tragedies come to an end and our stories are no longer treated as scenarios."」

The first comrade was a polite and warm person. Everyone followed his lead.

「"Until then, everyone being safe is the utmost priority."」

The second comrade was a kind person. Everyone believed her words to be correct.

「"No, hang on. It's more important that everyone survives, even at the cost of one person. Of course, that 'one person' must be Kim Dok-

Ja. That fool knows how to come back from being dead, anyway."」

The third comrade was a wise person. Everyone thought that the strategies she cooked up will succeed.

「"No one will die. Leave this place to me and go."」

The fourth comrade was a powerful person. Everyone could entrust their backs to him.

「"You know, Mister Hyeon-Seong. If I ever forget about you, then…"」

And, the fifth comrade was…

「"…Then, please kill me."」

His memories were coming back to him. Slowly, so very slowly, his heart began beating. So slowly, yet with a distinctive feeling, each beat did its very best to emphasize that they were hurting this way, that this was where such ache existed.

How could he have ever forgotten about them?

Yi Hyeon-Seong clenched his fists, his body shivering away. He shouldn't be in this place.

He looked up at the skies outside the windows. The cracks of the skies had covered the entirety of the heavens by now. It became rather clear where his companions had gone off to.

They went away to protect this world he was stuck in. All the while facing off against the calamities that measly North Korea couldn't even compare to.

「Yi Hyeon-Seong thought to himself. 'Do I possess such powers?'」

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', is looking at you.]

His Sponsor was now looking at him.

Tsu-chut, tsu-chuchuchut!!

However, something felt different from before. It must've been his Sponsor, yet there was a slight, vague difference in the gaze he sensed.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel' asks if you're hurting.]

Yi Hyeon-Seong nodded his head.

「This emotion, this heart, I wish to protect it.」

He was scared. Scared of forgetting this moment again, scared of his heart stop beating again. Scared of everything freezing up within the cold silvery light.

It was then, his Sponsor spoke to him. [[You can protect it.]]

His voice resembled forged steel, tempered for tens of thousands of years.

[[However, you may end up in agony for all eternity as the consequences of failing to protect it.]]

"Even then, it's fine. It's better than not even having a chance to protect them."

He was only familiar with the things he had lost already. The important part was about not losing them again.

[[Your name is the Emperor of Steelsword.]]

He saw the barbed wire fences in the distance crumble away. The world of manuals he had been protecting was disappearing.

Yi Hyeon-Seong stepped forward, towards his own story.

*

"Dok-Ja-ssi."

We were currently protecting the crumbling .

With the decline of the Fables of the Master of Steel, and the 「the Wizard of Oz」,

's anti-air defence system was crumbling down.

I could see hundreds of battleships surrounding Oz. We shared our strength and protected the planet with a hole in it from that armada.

Even then, we were reaching our limit.

The other side relied mainly on the long-range attacks from their ships. The only methods we had of defending against that effectively were Yi Ji-Hye's [Turtle Dragon], and Shin Yu-Seung's [Chimera Dragon].

The problem here was that neither Yi Ji-Hye's vessel and Shin Yu-Seung's dragon had fully recovered from the damages incurred during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

We originally came here to address that issue, but this…

"The anti-air defence will be rendered powerless soon!"

We got ready for the final showdown.

Jeong Hui-Won asked. "Still can't contact any other Constellations?"

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"Something bad must've happened."

It was likely that these guys attacking us were involved in that.

Han Su-Yeong grumbled loudly. "You really aren't going to regret this? Should we really be doing this?"

I nodded my head. "Yi Hyeon-Seong always fought for us in the frontlines. It's our turn to repay that debt."

My companions agreed with me.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was currently on top of the tallest building on the planet, while Jeong Hui-Won was emitting powerful Status that didn't lose out to anyone, her resolve firm, unwavering.

「We'll believe in Yi Hyeon-Seong.」

I wasn't sure exactly how much time we could buy here. Just that, I could only pray it was enough for Yi Hyeon-Seong.

"Incoming!"

Ka-booooooom!!

Hundreds of battleships in the distance spat out flames simultaneously. Magical shells, their numbers more than enough to utterly decimate a planet in its entirety, rained down.

We unleashed all of our Statuses. We needed to withstand this wave of attack no matter what.

After gathering all of our magical…

Right next moment.

A vast silvery light suddenly enveloped the whole world.

The enormous protective barrier made out of Fable metal spread out among the heavens. Through the semi-transparent barrier, I saw the shells of the battleships

powerlessly explode on the outside.

"Being left alone in a place like that was not a happy experience, you know."

This was not the Fable of 「the Wizard of Oz」. No, it was a new type of Fable, with a somewhat different origin.

「In that world, he was referred to as the Emperor of Steelsword.」

Kwa-kwakwakwa!!

Chills ran down my spine.

Steam covered the entire planet. Metals spreading out like a giant tree's branches began blanketing the surface of the planet itself.

This was the hardest material found in , the only Fable metal capable of dealing with the Myth-grade Constellation's frightening weapons.

[A large number of Constellations are astonished by the scale of this Fable!]

And here it was, the Stigma powerful enough to completely envelop a planet with that metal. That was the anti-air defence system that the planet proudly boasted, the

[Last Steel].

"Captain Yi Hyeon-Seong from the Giant Monsters Special Command, reporting."

The man I was familiar with, blessed a height taller than Yu Jung-Hyeok's, and boasting the sturdiest body.

"I have been discharged from the active service today."

Stars of the skies could be seen staggering back now.

[Constellations from Nebula are astonished by the revival of the 'Master of Steel'!]

And now, it was the time for the counterattack.

Fin.

[You have become a Great Dokkaebi.]

[You can now participate in the Great Dokkaebi's 'Final Ballot'.]

Bihyung looked at the messages and slowly blinked. His appearance had changed a lot since meeting the Dokkaebi King. He was now in a complete humanoid figure like Baram, with the white tiger leather draped over his shoulders and three yellow horns emanating the powers of Fable on his head.

He had now become a full-on 'Great Dokkaebi'.

[I shall be on my way now, Baram-nim.]

[Are you planning to go to them?]

Bihyung didn't reply.

But Baram continued on, anyway. [All Dokkaebis must select their own final stories when the end of times draws near. Even if they could die telling that particular story.]

[…]

[The story you're about to select has very low odds of victory.]

[I'm aware.]

[Not only that, they have made enemies of the Bureau and quite a number of other Great Dokkaebis, too.]

[I'm also aware of that.]

There was no Dokkaebi alive who didn't know what it meant to become enemies with the Bureau in .

[Even still, I'd like to see the end of this world with that story.]

Bihyung had chosen his last Fable.

*

"Dok-Ja-ssi."

"Have you come out to enjoy your vacation?"

"Don't be like that. I told you, it's not a vacation but a discharge."

"A real discharge, then?"

"Yes." Yi Hyeon-Seong smiled brightly. "I won't be a soldier anymore."

I observed the silvery Fable leaking out from his entire figure. When reading the opening sentences of some novels, you'd get a certain sense of what they are like, and Fables were similar in that regard.

「That resolute silver hue. The unwavering will, tempered through a lengthy period of time.」

Back in the 'Isle of Reincarnators', the One Invincible Fist Yu Ho-Seong said this – in order to rule over certain Fables, you needed to understand it first. However, just like how it was impossible to fully understand another human being, it was also impossible to fully understand a Fable.

「What we can do instead, is to come up with an interpretation of our

own.」

In that case, this was the answer Yi Hyeon-Seong had come up with.

[Fable, 'Ruler of Steel', has begun its storytelling!]

That was the core Fable possessed by the 'Master of Steel'. The fact that he could finally wield it meant that Yi Hyeon-Seong had reached the last phase in the [Steel Transformation].

"I didn't get to write a report, but I still understood why you asked me to read that book, Dok-Ja-ssi," said Yi Hyeon-Seong before reverting to a more cautious voice. "Was

that perhaps the story from the 999th regression turn world-line?"

I was somewhat surprised. Didn't expect that he'd think that far ahead.

"I believe that might be the case."

"But then, why was that story transformed into 「the Wizard of Oz」…?"

From my own knowledge base, 's founding Fable was 「the Wizard of Oz」.

However, the Fable forming its foundation had been altered.

Not only that, to a story from the 999th turn, no less.

I wasn't sure what all this meant yet, but still, I could think of something. The meaning of altering the basis of a Fable was quite clear, after all.

[Sponsor of Incarnation 'Yi Hyeon-Seong' is now looking at you.]

I might have not noticed the faintly altered gaze if it was in the past. It was not the same aura of the 'Master of Steel' I knew of. I shifted my

gaze towards the Emerald Tower where that altar was located at. And then, recalled the large steel sword I saw in the audience chamber.

"Hyeon-Seong ahjussi!"

Our companions preparing for the enemy's attacks below the tower rushed towards us.

"Hyeon-Seong ahjussi! Are you alright?"

Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong jumping around grasped the tall, sturdy man's hands tightly.

Yu Jung-Hyeok arriving a step later muttered out. "Looks like you were safely discharged."

Both Yu Sang-Ah and Han Su-Yeong decided to chime in, too.

"Congratulations on your discharge."

"If you need your squad leader again, just give me a shout."

The last person to rush in was Jeong Hui-Won, who was getting ready to fend off the enemy's attacks in the farthest location. She stopped about a dozen metres or so away, and while her lips twitched, she kept staring in this direction.

Yi Hyeon-Seong smiled at her. "Hui-Won-ssi."

I began wondering if I should make my exit from here about now. But the person who solved that dilemma was a completely unexpected person.

"Hey, you lot! Do your emotional reunion later! It's not over yet, you know!"

Yi Ji-Hye shouted out as she summoned the [Turtle Dragon] in the air.

She was right. The Nebulas outside the planet hadn't withdrawn their battle line yet.

No, rather than retreating, an even higher number of battleships were actually showing up now. Among them were dreadnoughts exclusively designed for destroying planets and inter-Nebula warfare.

"Do not worry. I won't leave them alone." said our trustworthy Yi Hyeon-Seong as he stepped forward.

For sure, they were still bombarding us on the outside, but 's barrier was holding firm. Like I said before, the strength of Master of Steel's Fable inside would almost match a Myth-grade Constellation's…

Chiieeeek…

A rather ominous-sounding noise could be heard coming from somewhere. A foul smell akin to something burning wafted out.

I raised my head to discover that a side of the opaque barrier was being ignited in the shower of blinding sparks as if it was being welded open.

Something was melting down Yi Hyeon-Seong's forged steel.

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is staring at the planet .]

Right then, I sensed Yi Hyeon-Seong's body stiffen up greatly. He had covered the whole

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planet for us, so no doubt he was currently fully exposed to the Status of that gaze.

Even if he was almost on the level of a Myth-grade Constellation, that still didn't mean he was equal to one.

I placed my hand on his shoulder. His trembling lessened a little after

receiving a share of the Nebula's Probability. One shouldn't fight alone just because he had gotten a little bit stronger. Because, we were a Nebula, just like them.

“…Looks like a real bigshot has personally made an entrance."

I knew of the Modifier of 'Midday Sun'. Now normally, that guy should never be able to come here.

It was the top Constellation of the Nebula, . And the meaning of him coming here personally could only be…

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', has revealed its intention to .]

…That he no longer wished to hide their true intentions.

[Nebula , has revealed their animosity towards Nebula .]

[Two Nebulas recorded as the candidates for 'One Single Fable' are clashing!]

The expressions of the companions hardened after receiving that never-before-seen message. Something was about to get underway.

[Nebula has declared inter-Nebula warfare against Nebula .]

It was exceedingly rare in for a great Nebula to officially declare war against another. Because inter-Nebula warfare would never lead to a good result for all sides involved. There must've been a reason for them declaring one right now even though they knew the truth.

[Conditions to activate the restricted main scenario has been satisfied!]

[Applicable scenario will be issued only to the Nebulas recorded as the candidates of

'One Single Fable'.]

+

Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: All Nebulas recorded in the 'One Single Fable' can now freely engage in inter-Nebula warfare. It's possible to declare war without any penalties, and alliances and request for support between other Nebulas are now fully allowed.

Emerging victorious in the Candidate Selection War will ensure that you receive 's attention, and your odds of being selected as the 'One Single Fable' will improve.

Time limit: -

Reward: Increase in the Nebula's profile. Acquisition of Myth-grade Fable related to inter-Nebula warfare.

Failure: Reduction in the Nebula's profile. Qualification for the Final Scenario rescinded.

+

…I knew it.

[Currently, your Nebula is in war with !]

[Please defeat the enemy camp's leader.]

[You will be accredited with victory points if you win the applicable warfare.]

Visibly-tense companions quickly gathered around me. Hostility incomparably heavier than any other we felt in the past was enveloping the whole planet.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation' is glaring at Nebula .]

We had fought large Nebulas a couple of times in the past.

Back in , we fought against , and during the 「Journey to the West Remake」, against .

However, the story this time was completely different.

The restrictions on the Probability during were so great that Constellations couldn't really exercise their full powers, while during 「Journey to the West Remake」, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal and the members of judging panel lent us their powers and their Probability.

So, what about now?

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling.]

Was there any Nebula that might help us now?

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

Companions were now looking at me.

They all looked to have made up their minds. Their eyes were proof that they knew what was about to happen and where our new battlefield was.

"Let's go."

No one would come to help us.

I looked up at the sky and spoke. "We're not weaklings anymore. Please open the sky, Hyeon-Seong-ssi."

Yi Hyeon-Seong nodded his head.

[Incarnation 'Jeong Hui-Won' is requesting the activation of 'Hour of Judgement!]

Jeong Hui-Won unsheathed her sword first. The [Judge's Sword] was enveloped in the auras of God Slaying.

[Incarnation, 'Yi Hyeon-Seong', has agreed with the judgement.]

Yi Hyeon-Seong's forged steel was placed on top of the companions' equipment. This

was the world's toughest 'oath' to protect his precious comrades.

[Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye', has agreed with the judgement.]

The silver-coloured Fable metal settled down on Yi Ji-Hye's [Turtle Dragon].

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yu-Seung', has agreed with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Yi Gil-Yeong', has agreed with the judgement.]

The Chimera Dragon too was dyed in the silvery hue; the monster roared out and carried the two kids into flight.

[Incarnation, 'Yu Sang-Ah', has agreed with the judgement.]

Lotus pedestals also reinforced by silver-coloured steel began rotating all around Yu Sang-Ah.

[Incarnation, 'Han Su-Yeong', has agreed with the judgement.]

Han Su-Yeong had unwrapped the bandages off her arm before anyone noticed it, and tied her hair with the very same bandages.

[Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', has agreed with the judgement.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] carrying the Status of a Transcender began emitting cold sword light next. And…

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', has agreed with the judgement.]

And I unsheathed the [Unbreakable Faith].

['Hour of Judgement' will now activate!]

The moment the pitch-black night sky opened up, we all boarded Yi Ji-Hye's vessel and leapt towards the heavens above.

The enemy's armada grew closer. We grasped our individual weapons as we faced off against an armada at least 600 ships strong.

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「This was the spectacle that Kim Dok-Ja had been longing to see for a very long time.」

Jeong Hui-Won was the first to dash out and her sword attack rained down. The strongest swordswoman of Chaos that I know of was Jeong Hui-Won the Judge of Apocalypse.

Ku-gugugugu!

A dreadnought was penetrated cleanly through from its cockpit right down to its engine bay, and explosion noises resounded out. Soon, explosions both large and small erupted out from all over its hull as cracks spreading all over it. We got to see the Constellations riding on it hurriedly make their escape.

Not missing that opening, Yi Ji-Hye's [Turtle Dragon] began its violent assault.

BOOOOOM!

Our vessel broke through the explosions, emerging unscathed. Yi Hyeon-Seong's Fable metal had protected everyone.

Yi Ji-Hye stepped forward. She was the greatest Incarnation there was when it came to large scale warfare, capable of destroying hundred-plus enemy ships with only one vessel.

The Naval Admiral Yi Ji-Hye ordered the shelling to commence.

"Ahjussi, we're going, too!"

Following on the cannon fires, Shin Yu-Seung's [Chimera Dragon] also took flight, as well.

The leader had to be brought down first to end this warfare. So, as we had a small number of participants, there was only one choice we could make, really – an all-out blitzkrieg.

Shin Yu-Seung the Beast Lord, and Yi Gil-Yeong the Insect King. Two of the most complete tamers that I knew of carved out a path for us. [Chimera Dragon] under Shin Yu-Seung's control fired the Breath to accurately strike down mid-sized enemy ships, while Yi Gil-Yeong's insects crawled through any open gaps found to deal with dozens

of smaller vessels trying to rush in at us.

"Stop right there!"

Insects crawled into the engines of smaller vessels and caused a series of huge explosions, thrusting the battlefield into pure chaos instantly.

Perhaps thinking that this couldn't go on anymore, Fable-grade Constellations began crawling out from the battleships one by one.

[Incarnation, 'Yu Sang-Ah', is unleashing her Status!]

[Fable, 'Hour of Mandala' is activating!]

The moment Yu Sang-Ah activated her Fable, the movements of the enemy Constellations slowed down visibly.

That shocked me. I was already aware of her inheriting a portion of Sakyamuni's powers, but didn't expect her to wield this much of an authority over it… An ability to control the flow of time itself?

"I can't continue this for long," said Yu Sang-Ah.

"It won't take that long."

Taking advantage of the time she bought for us, Yu Jung-Hyeok, Han Su-Yeong and I ran on the night sky.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring' is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth' has begun its storytelling!]

The two Great Fables that protected until now; we had been using these two as our main attack power so far. The aura of the Fables stretched on like the tail of a meteor. The space we flew past was engraved with sparkling stars.

We had already broken past countless battleships, yet hundreds of Constellations were still blocking our path. If we cowered even for a moment here, their Status would force us back and crush us to death with sheer pressure.

[Nebula 'Papyrus' is unleashing the Great Fable's Status!]

And so, this was the fight between two Nebulas.

"It's my turn now."

Originally, the Demon of Delusions Kim Nam-Wun should have been where Han Su-Yeong was now. However, not only had she performed that guy's role admirably, she had become an existence far surpassing him.

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness' has begun its storytelling.]

Finally, our third Great Fable began telling its story, as well. The distant cry of the Apocalypse Dragon could be heard like an auditory

hallucination. We saw the

's Constellations that participated in the Great War of Saints and Demons tremble in fear.

[T-this is…!]

The heavens split into two, one in light and the other in darkness, as 「Stage Transformation」 was activated. Han Su-Yeong's figure soared higher as she stepped on the blurred boundary between the light and darkness. The wings of 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' spread out wide behind her back.

Just like back when she swooped in to rescue me, purple-coloured [Black Flames]

were raging on both of her fists.

Kwa-aaaaaaah!

We rode on the storm of the Fable and advanced forward. This was the overwhelming splendour of a Great Fable that not even the Fable-grade Constellations could contend with.

We advanced forward like the Apocalypse Dragon's shockwave. But then, a gigantic sun stepped in to block us.

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is staring at .]

A lone pitch-black figure stood in the centre of the blinding ball of light. That was the Sun God Ra's true body.

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[You shall all die here today.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] roared on with a vicious howl.

Every Fable we possessed also howled and roared on. Even if it was just us two fighting together, facing off against a true Myth-grade Constellation was still asking a lot.

After all, we were only in the 3rd turn, so… Hang on, 3rd turn?

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity' has begun its storytelling!]

It was like that once upon a time.

['Reading together' has begun.]

Afterimages of pages flipping past entered my eyes. As the hellish landscape filled up the surroundings, my story began. On the road created out of countless letters – Yu Jung-Hyeok ran on his lengthy lifetime.

「The 41st turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok threw a spear, and」

「The 362nd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok extended his sceptre.」

「The 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok wielded his Demon Sword.」

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Violent sparks began digging into my body.

[Your Status can't handle your Reading Comprehension!]

For a brief moment during the 'Journey to the West', I managed to read up to the 1863rd turn. But that was only possible because the Great Sage and Outer Gods lent me their Probability.

[This is the true myth.]

Even after taking on Yu Jung-Hyeok's falling [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship], Ra didn't even budge.

[You cannot surpass the true myth.]

The minimum regression turn of Yu Jung-Hyeok needed to bring down a Myth-grade Constellation was 1700th.

I lacked power and lacked in Status. However, I didn't back down. "No, we can surpass it."

Because we still had one more Fable up our sleeve. The fourth Great Fable we earned by clearing 「the Journey to the West Remake」.

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones' has begun its storytelling!]

In the next moment, an abundant amount of a Fable's Probability permeated into my entire being. The Fable that the Great Sage and Outer Gods worked together to create was now roiling about over the contexts of my star and .

[is greatly surprised by your Status.]

[is currently reassessing your Status.]

Stinging bloody odour stabbed into my nose. The Tongtian River dyed in red from the corpses of Outer Gods appeared around us.

The sparks trying to drown me gradually lessened. The pages of the Hellscape began flipping past once more.

…1321st turn.

…1582nd turn.

…

…

And eventually, 1701st turn.

Yu Jung-Hyeok moved, his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] now loaded with the power from the 1701st regression turn.

The 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' from then that cut the oceans apart, destroyed the sun, and carved out the Myth-grade Constellation Poseidon's heart, was now opening his eyes.

「And this is the sight Kim Dok-Ja longed to see for a very long time.」

We could see Ra freak out and belatedly unleash his own Great Fable. I stared straight into Ra's eyes. That bastard's lips were mouthing, "But, how?"

I laughed.

"What do you mean, how?"

In order to kill a Myth-grade Constellation, you needed a power that equalled one.

The Myth-grade Constellation – existences that started their 'One Single Story' and had earned their 'Conclusion', or compiled their own incredible Great Fables and reached the cusps of their 'Conclusion' that way.

[Absolute majority of Constellations are greatly shocked by your Status!]

[Your Status has caused the Constellations from great Nebulas to…!]

Just like me right now, in other words.

[has announced your new Status.]

[Your Status is 'Myth-grade'.]

A stupendous boom resounded out as Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]

cut Ra's sun down.

Fin.

[A large number of Nebulas are freaking out at your Status!]

[Portion of Nebulas are freaking out at the sudden appearance of a new Myth-grade Constellation!]

[Portion of Constellations are requesting the 「Probability Suitability Evaluation」 to the 'Bureau'!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[Requests for the Probability Suitability Evaluation have been denied.]

[cannot interfere at will during the applicable scenario.]

The spectacle of the blinding sunlight crumbling down – I couldn't even breathe properly as I focused solely on the battle itself. Ra's torso, cut by [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], began emitting bright light.

Ku-gugugugu!

Accompanied by an intense storm of heat, our vision was clouded by thick steam. A ploy to buy time, no doubt.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok! Don't stop!"

I shouted out and desperately continued to read the Fable.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Fable, 'Comrade of Life and Death', is amplifying the effects of other Fables!]

I recalled the 1701st regression turn of Yu Jung-Hyeok that I read in the past. Yu Jung-Hyeok had fought against Poseidon one on one in that turn.

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「On the border where the ocean's boundaries meet, Iron Blood Conquering King unsheathed his sword.」

「"Poseidon. Today, you shall die."」

「A life that carried on for 1700 lifetimes. The swordsmanship borne out of this life now shone brilliantly.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok's blade moved as if to recreate that very battle. His sword gradually became faster and faster to utterly destroy Ra's sun.

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is enraged from the pain!]

Kwa-gagagagaga!!

Yu Jung-Hyeok's blade continued to dance on the stage I read into reality. An incredible storm of Probability's aftermath tried to crush me, but four Great Fables responded to each other and allowed me to endure the after-effects.

I still tasted iron in my mouth, though. My Incarnation Body was failing to cope with the sudden, abrupt increase in my Status.

[Nebula, , is observing your battlefield.]

[Nebula, , is observing your battlefield.]

[Nebula, , is observing your battlefield.]

[Nebula, , is observing your battlefield.]

Look all you want.

This battle was meant for all of you to see, anyway.

[Channel's indirect message restriction has been lifted!]

Even now, many Constellations would still be dismissive of our strength. They were probably thinking that we reached this far because of our luck and perhaps due to other Constellations lending their aid to us.

[A large number of additional Constellations are entering the channel!]

[Absolute majority of Constellations are observing your battle!]

However, this was now time to prove ourselves.

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', roaring out!]

Time to prove that was not some poor sobs needing your sponsorships but your actual competitors, and that we were a Nebula capable of bringing down a large Nebula with our own powers.

Kwa-dududuk!!

Yu Jung-Hyeok's sword slashes continued to corner Ra. The sunlight falling away made noises similar to actual flesh being ripped apart.

It was then, I sensed a sharp glare coming from the empty air.

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Noksu', is glaring at you.]

Great Dokkaebi Noksu – not even a mid or low-grade, but a 'Great' Dokkaebi. For someone like that, making the scenario rather inconvenient for us wouldn't be that difficult. However, even they

couldn't intervene carelessly in the 98th scenario.

Tsu-chuchuchut…

Because, the scenarios from now on would be of utmost importance to the Great Dokkaebis, as well.

[Great Dokkaebi and the Nebula are participating in the applicable scenario together.]

[All Dokkaebis can select the 'candidate' and its story they wish to tell.]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Noksu' has currently selected .]

I recalled the moment when Great Dokkaebis Heoju and Heoche came to see us just before the climax of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' got underway. Back then, those Dokkaebis said this:

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「You must decide now. Die in this place, or head off to the Final Scenario with us.」

Those words were suggestions meant for this very moment.

Great Dokkaebis facing the end times must risk their reputation, their insight, and their own Fables to select the candidates for the 'One Final Fable'. And that bastard named Noksu must've chosen as its candidate.

[According to the legend, there are three suns in .]

I spoke in true voice as Yu Jung-Hyeok's Incarnation body moved again.

With the speed faster than anyone in this universe, he swung his sword filled with the eternity's curse. Sharp strikes from the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] dug deeply into Ra's skin. The deity's

temperature, reputed to be capable of melting any metal, was being ably resisted by Yi Hyeon-Seong's Fable metal.

With a loud rupture, Ra's heart spewed out a Fable. That noble and lofty Myth-grade Constellation was being destroyed by our hands.

[If you were really planning to cut us down, then you should've descended with all of your selves first.]

The Myth-grade Constellation, Ra. A Constellation who had reached his own

'Conclusion', and had been hibernating within the Final Scenario's stage for a very long time.

[You think that someone like you, stuck inside a freezer until now, can win against us with just a single sun?]

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is screaming in pain!]

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is urgently scanning his vicinity!]

[Just how long will you sit back and watch?!]

Ra's shouting caused the stars of the sky to sparkle.

[Vedas! Olympus! Did you not all agree to participate together?!]

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…What?!

At the end of those words, ominous auras began rushing in from the distance.

The skies thrashed about and the sounds of crashing waves could be heard. The middle of pitch-black sky split up and an enormous current of water flooded out.

We quickly moved out of the way and dodged the waves of that

Status.

[Someone has announced his support to the Nebula, .]

[Someone is incarnating into the scenario!]

It was a possessor of a Status powerful enough to send shivers down my spine.

Someone who could equal Ra before us was now descending into this world.

[How pathetic, 'Ra'. Did you not declare that you alone would be sufficient for this matter?]

A voice reminding me of violent tidal waves resounded out. Quite surprisingly, the existence that descended to this place was the very enemy Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 1701st turn fought off desperately.

[Constellation, 'the Spear that draws the Boundaries of the Oceans' is incarnating to this scenario!]

Accompanying Poseidon's entrance were the stars of the heavens rushing in like storm clouds. They were Fable-grade Constellations from and . To make matters worse, among them were individuals known to be almost on the level of Myth-grade Constellations, as well.

[Nebula, , is condemning 's intervention!]

[Nebula, , is condemning 's intervention!]

Condemnation rained down. Completely not caring about that, Poseidon simply pointed his trident, 'Triaina', in our direction. [How dare measly beings such as yourselves try to witness the end of this ?]

The end of , the epilogue that determined the conclusion of all the

worlds. Right, I had been waiting for a long time to witness it.

That was true.

[I don't simply wish to see the 'end', actually.]

In all honesty, what I really wanted to see was…

"Ahjussi!"

My comrades had gathered around me even before I had noticed it – Jeong Hui-Won, Yu Sang-Ah, Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Yi Gil-Yeong, and Shin Yu-Seung.

The Fables we had created together were shining brightly in the empty night sky. I saw the trajectory of the Fables we've used beyond the galaxy in the far distance.

No matter how wide and expansive this universe was, I was confident of locating that very set of constellations regardless of where I was.

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', is shining brightly.]

[Fable, 'King of Kingless World', is shining brightly.]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is shining brightly.]

I hid all signs of emotions welling up in my heart and looked at my companions.

「That was where the Fable he longed for could be found.」

Poseidon emitting powerful Status extended his hand towards us.
[What a noisy little full stop you are. Now, disappear.]

's army rushed in.

My companions tensed up and gathered around me. I addressed them.
[I love the Fable I managed to create with all of you. Although we encountered many painful, sad things, we…]

Even then, I loved this story so much so that I wished for it to continue on forever.

"…That's not your final wish, now is it?"

Jeong Hui-Won asked after seeing my expression. She probably sensed something ominous from it.

I simply smiled back at her before staring at the empty skies beyond the Nebula's army rushing in at us.

My mother once told me this. A person who watched a certain story for a long time would eventually grow to resemble that story.

Perhaps that logic also applied to these stars, too.

[Die!]

Just before the tsunami wave of 's army pounced on us, though…

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is incarnating into the scenario!]

The night sky split up and the waterfall made out of hellish flames flooded out. A lone Constellation riding on the fiery waves started massacring other Constellations with her sword burning in flames.

The Archangel that I liked the best was right there.

[■ck you! You ■cking bastards!]

The true voices of Constellations freaking out could be heard over that torrent of expletives.

[…But, how?! You were definitely…!]

[■ck, man! I'm Uriel! You think you can kill me with such measly little numbers??]

Right after her, purple-coloured intense flames burned the heavens.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is incarnating into the scenario!]

[…Kekeke, to think you'd make me use both of my hands. You did well, .]

The wings of a massive flying dragon tore and crushed through the Constellations.

's battleships took aim at the Black Flame Dragon and got ready to fire. And in the following moment, dozens of vessels began exploding one after another along with loud booms.

One could spy the golden-coloured Ruyi Jingu Bang flitting in between the explosions.

[You're really making it so annoying, aren't you.]

Once the smoke cleared, a platinum-haired man could be seen standing there, digging his ear as if he was quite bored right now.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is incarnating into the scenario!]

Uriel, Black Flame Dragon, and the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal. These three's entrance caused unrest to spread out.

[…Great Sage! What is the meaning of this??]

[This is inter-Nebula warfare! Do you understand what you're trying to do…!]

Even before the enraged true voices of the Constellations could finish, someone else announced their support to our cause. [Just like you, we also have a Fable we wish to support, that's all.]

I knew whose voice that was.

Pitch-black yet gentle darkness wrapped around us, and a loving hand touched my shoulder.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is incarnating into the scenario!]

And if she was here, then that meant…

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is incarnating into the scenario!]

The King of Underworld's cold eyes scanned the battlefield. Here he was, the grim reaper of death capable of making all the stars shiver in fear.

First, it was the Great Sage, and now, the King of Underworld, too – the constant appearances of Myth-grade Constellations caused the enemy Constellations to hesitate and retreat.

[Nebula is supporting .]

The two camps emitted powerful Statuses and confronted each other as if to goad the other side to attack first. I could see the crumpled expressions of Poseidon and Ra in the distance. And how long went by like this? Constellations from one camp began retreating without saying anything.

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Oceans' is exiting from this scenario.]

The enemy Constellations began disappearing one by one. Their rate of exit grew faster now that a Myth-grade Constellation they placed so much faith in had left the scene. The panicking 's Constellations looked around in confusion all the while cautiously studying Ra's reaction. And eventually…

[Nebula has announced the withdrawal of its Constellations.]

Not too long after, only the half-crushed sun remained. Ra gritted its teeth noisily and glared at us, but before long, the sounds of a star

scattering away could be heard.

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is exiting from the scenario.]

The glow of setting sun filled the sky and the bright ball of fire disappeared below the horizon. Finally, this scenario's victors had been decided.

「And this is the sight Kim Dok-Ja longed to see for a very long time.」

Within the sunset's soft glow, I looked back to my companions.

「Some things didn't work out as he had been hoping.」

While staring at the disappearing sunlight, Yu Jung-Hyeok was still gripping the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] tightly.

「Meanwhile, some things went better than he expected.」

Han Su-Yeong, her lips twitching slightly, hurriedly wrapped the bandages around her arm while going, "Ouch, ouch, ouch!"

「There were moments where they got lucky irrelevant of their intentions.」

Yu Sang-Ah sighed gently and smiled back at me.

「However, all those events came together to create this very moment in time.」

[Nebula has won the inter-Nebula warfare!]

[Reward payout is being prepared.]

Both the companions and I didn't say anything.

This wasn't our first victory, but in a certain sense, it was indeed our

first victory. For a long time there, we didn't say a word and stared at each other's faces.

We won.

We really emerged victorious against another 'Nebula'.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Heoju' is gasping after seeing your Fable.]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Garang' wishes to vote for your Fable.]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Haesol' wishes to…]

Only the system messages floated up in the empty air now.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Bihyung' has voted for your Fable.]

[Mid-rank Dokkaebi 'Biyu' likes your story very much.]

I watched the shadows of two Dokkaebis cast by the setting sun and began thinking to myself.

We were almost there.

I turned my head towards the companions once more. I wanted to say something to

them while looking at them. But, they all carried expressions of already knowing what I wanted to say.

Jeong Hui-Won spoke up instead of me. "Let's go and witness the conclusion of this world. Together."

I nodded my head.

Fin.

[Your ■■ is getting nearer.]

The system message whispered in my ear. It had been repeating itself over and over again for the past few days.

"It seems that it won't be long now."

"Yes."

My mother and I were sitting face to face over a table, drinking tea together. We were watching the display panel installed in the [Industrial Complex]'s reception room.

- The American continent, annihilated! What's the next target for these Outer Gods?

- Emergency evacuation order issued in North-East Asia!

- Nebulas have abandoned Earth. "There is no place left to run."

The last place the news program showed was the Korean Peninsula. Refugees streaming in from all over the world ensured that the whole peninsula was bucking raucously even now.

I was well aware of what they were hoping for by coming here.

[Next Great Apocalypse scenario location is 'North-East Asia'.]

[6 days, 8 hours and 24 minutes remaining until the start of the Great Apocalypse scenario.]

My mother inside the panel was making an announcement in my stead as the representative of the [Industrial Complex].

- The [Industrial Complex] won't stop accepting new citizens. However…

My mother smiled bitterly and spoke. "It's quite embarrassing to watch, isn't it."

"But, it suits you well. You're like the President, actually."

In all honesty, it was fine to think of my mother as the current master of the [Industrial Complex], not me. The citizens of this place would rather listen to her more than me, at any rate.

"You should show your face to Seoul's residents at least once before leaving, son. Even a simple greeting from you will become a great source of strength to them."

For sure, I could hear the reporters using megaphones to shout their questions from outside the [Industrial Complex].

- Demon King of Salvation-nim!! Is it true that you have returned?

- Demon King of Salvation-nim! Please tell us your plan to stop the Apocalypse!

…My plan, is it.

I smiled bitterly just like my mother. "If that's the duty of the mascot, then well."

We quietly sipped the tea.

The skies were dark and gloomy. So gloomy, in fact, it'd not be strange to see a thunderbolt fall from the sky out of the blue and shatter the Peninsula in half.

"It's so peacefully, isn't it?"

"I guess so, mother."

Even so, we said those things.

The tea leaf inside the cup gently trembled. To think, I'd enjoy such a leisurely tea time.

This would be the first time in our 30-something years of relationship as a mother and son.

The event I so wanted to experience only came knocking on my doorstep as the apocalypse of everything approached us.

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My mother, she didn't ask me anything. Not a thing about what I would do from now on, what I would gain at the end of this story, nothing. I knew that was how she operated, though.

"Well, I'll be on my way now."

"The Heavenly Wind God was searching for you. Before you embark, please do make sure to speak to him first."

…Pungbaek? Why was he looking for me this time?

I couldn't help but recall that unpleasant incident back in the Great War of Saints and Demons. Was he thinking of doing something uncouth again just before the Final Scenario? I lightly nodded my head and exited the room.

There was someone waiting for me there.

[And here we are. You somehow managed to get this far, Kim Dok-Ja.]

It was none other than Bihyung, looking so much better than before after becoming a Great Dokkaebi. The long coat fashioned out of a white tiger's fur really suited him well.

I spoke in a sarcastic tone of voice. "You were actually waiting for me?"

[The reunion of you and your mother is a pretty popular Fable among your subscribers. So, I just couldn't bear to interrupt the flow.]

Bihyung shrugged his shoulders and spoke up.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is dabbing her eyes away.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is grumbling while handing over a handkerchief.]

This damn guy, sending that out as another broadcast.

[And so. The Final Scenario is literally just around the corner.]

"I know."

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[How reliable you are. I'm sure you already know this, but the Final Scenario is…]

"Bihyung."

My quiet call stopped the Dokkaebi from talking anymore. He stared at me.

"Why did you select us?"

A faint ripple spread within Bihyung's eyes.

I already knew what was written on the scenario window that popped up before his eyes.

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Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Please choose the final candidate for the 'One Single Fable'.

Time limit: -

Reward: ???

Failure: Death

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's scenarios didn't only apply to Constellations and Incarnations, but to the storytellers like Dokkaebies, too. And the 'Candidate Ballot' that would decide the end of all scenarios was an incredibly important scenario for all Dokkaebis. It was a scenario where they had to bet their own existence.

And in such a scenario, Bihyung had chosen us.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Bihyung' has currently cast his vote with .]

When I first met this guy, he was no bigger than a soccer ball.

He was a true Dokkaebi who indiscriminately massacred people for the sake of increasing the number of subscribers in the channel, and he mass-produced horrifying scenarios on the fly.

That very Dokkaebi who grew up by devouring the Fables we created had eventually morphed into a human-like being. He was as tall as a human, he wore clothes like a human, and he was making expressions of a human, too.

That very Dokkaebi, he was looking at me on a similar eye level as he spoke up. [Sign the contract with me. I shall make you the next Dokkaebi King.]

"…?"

[That's what you said to me inside that fish-dragon's mouth.]

Indeed, I did say something like that in the past. "Hang on, could it be that you selected us while believing in that rubbish? There are very low odds of us winning, you know."

[It's not like that anymore. I see that you still have no idea how big of a deal what you did was.]

Bihyung shifted his gaze outside the window.

The plaza of the [Industrial Complex] was filled with the Constellations that fought with us in the battle against Papyrus.

The Black Flame Dragon got subdued by Uriel and was currently acting as her cushion.

Persephone and Hades were quietly sipping tea on a prepared table. The Great Sage, meanwhile, had borrowed a pipe-like cigarette from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and was busy puffing away.

They were watching the Star Stream broadcasts unfolding in real-time.

- A brand new list naming '12 Nebulas' are making rounds among the gossipers of

…

- A portion of Fable-grade Constellations estimate that could very well be the 3rd strongest…

…Third strongest, was it. It seemed that the ripples from the last battle were larger than I thought. I was thankful for the generous assessment, but it was still too early to let our guard down. Because the war for the Candidate Ballot hadn't ended yet.

However, Bihyung's thoughts seemed to be a bit different from mine.

[I think it'll be fine for a little while. It's been two days since you defeated .

Did any other Nebula request for inter-Nebula warfare since then?]

“…No. No one."

[A Nebula that achieves a big win during the Candidate Ballot battles will enjoy much higher odds of being selected as the 'One Single Fable'.]

Just like how one battle helped up climb up to the 'third strongest' position, other Nebulas could also participate in the inter-Nebula warfare and alter the rankings. So, messages of declarations of war or announcements of one soon to take place should be raining down on us by now.

However, forget about a declaration, not a single Nebula tried to provoke us. The planet Earth was surprisingly peaceful.

"But, why? It's not as if our Fable is that shocking, now was it?"

[That's because you're going to be annihilated even if they leave you alone. That's why.]

I felt my heart cool down in an instant. I could see the footage playing on the Constellations' panels.

[Constellations know that you simply can't forsake Earth.]

Separate from the 'Candidate Ballot battles', Earth had entered the Great Apocalypse sequence. The North American continent was already no more, and next up was North-east Asia.

Back in the original story's Final Scenario, Outer Gods and the rulers of other worlds also began invading this world.

[The ascension of the forgotten islands are still ongoing!]

「At the end of the world-line, the corrosion of the forgotten beings will begin.」

According to the original storyline, Nebulas and I should've been fighting together here. But now, they had made a different decision. They gave up on Earth, and to eliminate . That was the decision made by the Nebulas facing the 'Final Scenario'.

"Those sons of bitches…"

[A portion of Nebulas are mocking your decision.]

You could say that this was the worst possible situation.

To make matters worse, the Outer Gods flooding into this world were different from the ones that I knew of from the original storyline.

I recalled Uriel from the 999th regression turn I met in the N'Gai's Forest some time ago.

「Once the Great Apocalypse scenario begins, the attacks from the Kings will commence.」

If my predictions were correct, then the Kings showing up for the Great Apocalypse soon to get underway should be the existences that witnessed the 'Conclusion' during the 999th regression turn. And

needed to fight against them.

"Who summoned the Kings? Was it your people from the Bureau?"

[I can't reveal any information to you. Except that…] Bihyung formed an expression showing his firm resolve and finished what he wanted to say. [Until the moment I breathe my last, I shall tell my story with you.]

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"If you don't wish to participate, it's fine to leave now."

Funnily enough, this was the first thing I said to my companions.

"The next scenario is incomparably horrifying than any other battles we've been through so far. It's not too late. If any of you wish to leave the Nebula, then…"

A couple of them began yawning as if they were listening to a boring Sunday mass.

But, that was obvious. These people right before my eyes had survived dozens of life-threatening events together to get this far. To them, there was no difference to dying in this or that event. If they want to leave, they would've done so already. I too knew this.

Even then, the reason why I had to ask the obvious question was…

"Excuse me."

…Because, there was someone who did want to leave for real.

"I'd like to sit out this one."

And it was none other than Han Myeong-Oh. It wasn't as if I didn't expect this.

He carried on. "I'm not saying I'll completely leave the Nebula. However, there is a place I wish to visit for one last time."

Yi Ji-Hye next to him retorted unhappily. "Eh-whew, ahjussi, why don't you just leave?

You aren't much of a help, anyway. You'll just run away like your ass is on fire once the fighting starts, right?"

"…I might be like this, but back in my heyday when I was a Count in the Demon World…"

Originally, the words 'Demon World' and 'Count' in that sentence should've been replaced by 'Mino Soft Director'.

Watching them go back and forth brought about a wry grin on my face. Actually, I knew where Han Myeong-Oh wished to go.

"Are you thinking of going to where the 'Isle of Reincarnators' used to be?"

My question caused Han Myeong-Oh's expression to harden visibly.

I carried on. "Even if the area's been sealed, the aftereffects of the Apocalypse Dragon

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and 'Indescribable Distance' still linger there. That place will still be considerably dangerous."

"Even then, I'd like to go and take a look."

The Isle of Reincarnators, where the Great War of Saints and Demons took place. Even now, corpses of dead stars and Outer Gods should be floating around aimlessly near the vicinity of the dark dimension. Those beings that failed to get on the Ark and got killed in the process.

…Perhaps the Demon King 'Asmodeus' was among them.

"That child is everything I've earned in this world."

The light of determination shone within Han Myeong-Oh's eyes.

Post-Great War, he diligently participated in the main scenarios with us. He was working incomparably harder than back when he used to steal certain projects away from his subordinates for the sake of advancing his career.

And he got to taste the fruit of his labour, too – although small, he still earned a share of a Great Fable, and even acquired several useful Star Relics in the process, too.

All of that was to help him search for his daughter.

The current him might be able to withstand the chaos's aftereffects lingering around Isle of Reincarnator for a few days.

"Please, be careful out there."

Han Myeong-Oh nodded his head, finished his preparations, and stood up. Looked to me he had already made up his mind before coming here. Companions all bade him good luck.

Not receiving the 'One Single Fable' scenario didn't automatically mean there would be no 'One Single Fable' – it existed for everyone. Just like how anyone could embark on a journey to search for their own ■■.

I watched him tremble in fear as he stepped foot inside the portal and began thinking about something.

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[Your ■■ is getting nearer.]

It wasn't that decided where your 'Conclusion' might be.

I looked back to discover that my companions were waiting for me.

"I shall continue with the meeting."

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[11 hours and 8 minutes until the start of the Great Apocalypse scenario.]

Only about half a day remained before the Great Apocalypse. If we managed to withstand this apocalyptic event, we'd be able to enter the Final Scenario.

In the meantime, I went through all the information in the original story, and requested for the acquisition of every useful remaining Star Relic and skill found not just in the Korean Peninsula, but the rest of the planet as well. Companions easily okayed my request.

Han Su-Yeong asked. "And what will you do?"

Of course, I too had something to do. For instance, thinking up of a new sure-kill technique with this uptight dude.

"You fool must surely know this by now. There is only one way for us to fight against the Great Apocalypse," said Yu Jung-Hyeok, while polishing the edges of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

Uriel, the Black Flame Dragon, the Great Sage and other Constellations promised to lend us their aid, but we couldn't rely on them all the time.

Even after excluding the 'Secretive Plotter', there were four more King-level Outer Gods still to appear. If all of them decided to attack simultaneously, then we wouldn't be able to win even if the Myth-grade Constellations such as the Great Sage and the King of Underworld were with us.

However, we did have one method we could use to fight back.

The 「Hellscape of Eternity.」

The reward of the 1863rd regression turn, the Myth-grade Fable I earned through the

'Secretive Plotter'. With this Fable, I could recreate Yu Jung-Hyeok's memories, and he could rouse up the powers of the 1863rd turn and use it by sharing that stage of memories with me.

The only problem was…

[Reading has failed!]

[The highest Yu Jung-Hyeok's regression turn you can read currently is '978th'.]

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is looking at you with criticising eyes.]

…Something had gone wrong with my reading ability.

[Reading has failed!]

[The highest Yu Jung-Hyeok's regression turn you can read currently is '778th'.]

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is wondering if you have dyslexia.]

And now, even the Fable was beginning to mock me.

This thing continued on for several days now, and Yu Jung-Hyeok, unable to hold it back anymore, finally blew his top. "How pathetic. Did you not say you've been reading books for all your life?"

“…It's not all my life, you know. In any case, this is a different sort of problem."

I also had no idea. Why was this happening only now?

"If this problem persists, you better hand over the Fable to me. It'll be simpler if I use it myself."

"I'd have given you already if only I could."

I had already asked the 'Secretive Plotter' about it. He simply ignored me, though.

"In that case, use that possession skill from the last time. Use that, then activate the Fable. The rate of assimilation goes higher if you do."

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He must've been talking about the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] here.

"I'd like not to rely on that if I can."

For sure, activating [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] would make using the Fable so much simpler. That skill's effect was similar to a Sponsor taking over the control of an Incarnation. However…

"Using that skill leaves my Incarnation body defenceless. So, it's for the best to win without resorting to it if possible."

"How laughable. This is the result of neglecting your training every day."

“…Do you honestly think everyone can train to a ridiculous degree like you?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok glared at me for a short while before focusing on the Fable once more without saying anything else.

He probably already knew the truth – that the reason for my unwillingness to rely on

[Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] was actually something else.

「For a while now, [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] stopped listening to Kim Dok-Ja's commands.」

Not only that, the skill would activate when I least wanted it to and start reading people's minds. I wasn't sure why such a thing was happening.

It was possible that I got too used to looking inside someone's head. I

had gotten too used to reading nicely-laid out sentences of their inner thoughts rather than listening to their actual words.

[Reading has failed.]

Maybe, me suddenly developing an inability to read was an obvious consequence.

"Focus properly, Kim Dok-Ja."

I reactivated the Fable after hearing Yu Jung-Hyeok's rebuke. I slowed down my breathing and collected my thoughts.

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[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

I should forget about all the info I knew on Yu Jung-Hyeok.

I knew nothing about him.

This guy, he was a complete stranger to me.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was not some crazed psychopath, nor was he an impregnable stubborn idiot, either.

When I thought like that, it felt as if the inside of my head was clearing up just a little.

Right, I should start from there. Just like back at that moment when I read the 'Ways of Survival' for the first time.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

It was right then that something strange occurred.

[A problem has occurred during your reading attempt!]

Suddenly, Yu Jung-Hyeok's complexion paled greatly. "Kim Dok-Ja! You fool, what have you…!"

Those were his last words, as the light disappeared from within his eyes.

I was taken by surprise and hurriedly asked him. "Hey, are you alright??"

There was no answer.

[Character 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's' egos are colliding!]

Egos were… colliding??

Growing even more urgent now, I tried to confirm his current status, but then…

['Character List' has failed to activate.]

The text that appeared afterwards was a sentence that I heard quite a long time ago.

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[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

Fin.

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The unconscious Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't want to wake up even after four hours passed by.

"Hey, you crazy idiot! Wake up!"

Han Su-Yeong and I took turns slapping his cheeks. Unfortunately, he still showed no signs of waking up at all.

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!!

Also, his damn cheeks were so hard that even the concerted slapping from both of us failed to puff them up. Our palms went numb from pain, instead.

Han Su-Yeong spoke in a genuinely impressed tone of voice. "You know, this is kind of fun?"

“…This is no time to crack jokes like that."

[5 hours and 12 minutes remaining until the start of the Great Apocalypse Scenario.]

We really didn't have much time left. Soon, the 'Great Apocalypse' will commence, and the Outer Gods would start invading us due to the expanding Probability.

But now, Yu Jung-Hyeok was in this state.

I couldn't even begin to guess what went wrong where. Was this related to my

[Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] somehow?

['Character List' has failed to activate.]

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

I tried using [Character List] one more time, but the resulting message was the same.

There were a lot of 'Yu Jung-Hyeoks' in this universe, but that message only ever appeared with just one. That Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 1863rd regression turn, disappearing towards his own story…

When I got that far, I began thinking of something. But… could it really be?

Yi Seol-Hwa watching on from the side asked a question. "Should we feed him the [Life and Death Pill]?"

Not too long ago, she finally managed to perfect the ultimate recovery medicine, the

[Life and Death Pill]. This elixir could apparently cure any and all fatal wounds when ingested.

"Have you already reached the level of mass-producing it?"

"No, not yet. I was only able to concoct a few. Didn't have enough ingredients…"

I could only sigh. Since we didn't know what might happen, we couldn't afford to carelessly waste the [Life and Death Pill].

[Character 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's' egos are colliding!]

On top of that, we weren't sure if the problem of one's ego could be solved by the [Life and Death Pill], either. It was then, a slight vibration reverberated throughout the Industrial Complex.

"Dok-Ja-ssi, we've detected movement."

Yi Hyeon-Seong opened the sick bay's door and hurriedly entered.

Han Su-Yeong and I looked at each other at the same time. I urgently switched the display panel on and the Pacific Ocean's situation soon filled it up.

Ku-gugugugu!

The wave that swallowed up the American continent revealed itself once more.

Transparent dome walls had stopped the wave, and it was steadily increasing its water level, instead.

The Probability was still restricting it, that was why.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

However, that Probability's wall was being pushed back bit by bit. The border that crossed the vast Pacific was gradually widening its diameter. We could also see the

'Outer Gods' wiggling about in between the rising waves.

In five hours' time, that border would reach the Korean Peninsula, and this land would disappear from the face of this Earth.

“…Kim Dok-Ja. A plan?"

"I do have one," said I, before glancing at the unconscious Yu Jung-Hyeok and adding something else. "Although, it looks like I'll have modify it a bit now."

"Stop making me worried, alright? How did that thing get stopped back in the original storyline?"

"Nebulas all desperately fought together. Most of the Constellations were ground down to fine dust trying to stop that."

"Where are those oh-so-mighty Constellations, then?"

"What do you mean, where?"

[Many Constellations are watching your judgement.]

Most likely, they were busy spectating on our apocalypse.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is criticising other Constellations, asking them if the ideals of righteousness in have all

withered away.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is crossing his arms and shaking his head.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', finds the Constellations of the large Nebulas quite pathetic.]

Even though Constellations from our side provoked them, they remained composed in their replies.

[A portion of Constellations argue that all of this was brought upon by themselves.]

Some of them even began arguing that it was our fault, too.

[A small number of Constellations argues that it's that stole away their shares first.]

Now normally, such an argument was utter drivel with no leg to stand on, but for some reason, my mind remained calm even after hearing them. Because I roughly knew why they were acting like this.

Back when we went to visit , the monkey told me this.

- Many Fables that constitute Great Fables have all entered the path of stagnation similar to 's situation. A certain Fable that has appeared in recent times have begun eating into the percentages of other Fables, you see… I'm talking about you people's Fable.

Originally, the main actors leading this stage should've been the Nebulas that had been compiling their myths for a long time. However, several of them either lost the important Fables to us or got destroyed in the process. In the midst of all this, even decided to grandly label us as the 'third strongest' Nebula, so the sense of deprivation the existing stars felt must've been indescribable.

…Of course, it didn't mean that what these stars were doing right now was correct or justified.

Han Su-Yeong chewing on her nails asked. "Isn't it better to give up on Earth? How about we come up with the way to reach the 'Final Scenario' with everyone, instead…?"

"You know that's not going to happen."

Only the ones permitted could reach the Final Scenario.

Even if everyone on Earth was inducted into , the aftermath of the Probability's storm caused by the nonsensical scenario jump would ensure our complete destruction.

"Goddammit."

I could sense [Predictive Plagiarism] spinning its gears vigorously inside her head.

"You said that these Outer God Kings are beings from the 999th turn. How many are there, anyway?"

"From what I know, there are four excluding the 'Secretive Plotter'."

“…Are we going to fight all four of them at the same time??"

I shook my head and recalled the list of the 'Outer God Kings' I memorised back then.

「The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

「The 'Master of the Sunken Island', the calamity of the world in the west.」

「The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the ruler of the northern universe.」

「The 'King of Silverlight Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.」

The beings that became the 'Outer God Kings' after witnessing the 'Conclusion' of the 999th regression turn.

However, Even if this was the we were talking about, I wasn't convinced that they'd insert every King into this scenario. They didn't really like the scenarios that they couldn't control, after all. Which meant…

"One has appeared in the Pacific Ocean. And when all of our forces start moving, one more should show up. That would make two Kings."

"Okay, so one is the Pacific Ocean bastard, and the other will be Uriel from the 999th turn?"

"Correct."

"How strong are they? I only saw for a brief moment back then…"

"Well, Uriel from the 999th turn is responsible for leaving the 'Secretive Plotter' in that state, so yeah."

"…Son of a bitch. And something like that is going to show up with underlings, too??"

Han Su-Yeong clearly witnessed the power of 'Secretive Plotter' during the battle against the Apocalypse Dragon. So, her reaction couldn't be seen as over the top.

"Constellations of our channel will definitely help us, right?"

"Even if they help us, there is no guarantee of our victory. Most importantly, we won't be at our full combat strength with Yu Jung-Hyeok missing."

My original plan was to split the companions in two to divide and conquer the Outer God Kings. However, if the main combatant Yu Jung-Hyeok were to go missing from the picture, then we won't be able to rely on the 1863rd turn's power to survive.

Kwa-kwakwakwa!

We saw the 'wave' gradually widening its area of influence through the display panel.

It'd be too late if we started defending ourselves when the boundaries of the Great Apocalypse reached the Korean Peninsula.

I quickly came to a new decision.

"Let's get moving. I'll tell you what you must do."

Five hours remained.

We needed to finish our preparation within this time frame.

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While Han Su-Yeong was busy conveying my new plan to our companions, I went to talk to Yi Gil-Yeong. After hearing my summons, the boy quickly rushed into the reception room with a bright expression.

"Hyung! You called for me? What's up?"

I nodded my head. "Please sit over here."

He quickly sat down on the couch and looked up at me with his sparkling eyes as if he couldn't wait to hear what I had to say.

I stared deeply into his eyes.

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「The child who used to think of this world as a game.」

Even now, the memories of the moments I first met Yi Gil-Yeong remained fresh in my head. It was a nightmare filled with the flickering overhead lights of the subway and grasshoppers all leaping up into the air simultaneously. If Yi Gil-Yeong hadn't caught any insects that day, the one to die would've been me.

「The insect-collecting boy without a mother was now old enough to be a middle-school student.」

I didn't save his mother that day. What would've happened if I made a different choice back then?

For instance, what if my disgust towards humans was less intense? What if I didn't notice the injuries on the boy's arm while grabbing the grasshoppers? What if I didn't have a habit of hastily guessing a person's history with just a few circumstantial evidence?

What if I hadn't read the 'Ways of Survival'?

What if I… wasn't Kim Dok-Ja…?

“…Sorry."

Ng?

“…I'm sorry, hyung."

Yi Gil-Yeong had his head lowered, his shoulders trembling from trepidation like a child about to be handed down a scary punishment.

Was it because I looked scary? Or, was it because of some other reason?

Yi Gil-Yeong continued on. "But, but, I didn't have a choice… If I hadn't signed the contract, Shin Yu-Seung might have…”

Only then did I realise what he was trying to say.

「And this boy signed the contract with the devil in order to protect his precious

something.」

A certain moment from the 「Journey to the West」 brushed past my view. Right, I witnessed it clearly, didn't I – the yellowish storm erupting out from the boy's figure while being surrounded by the Nine Stars.

Yi Gil-Yeong was talking about that time.

"I, I do remember you telling me to never use my Sponsor's powers! I swear, I didn't deliberately break our promise! I, I really…"

As the boy spoke incoherently, I placed my hand on his head. "You did well."

"Eh?"

The boy's eyes grew wider, so I spoke with more conviction in my voice. "You did well.

Without you, we'd have all died back then."

I was aware of how tough it had been for this boy. Because I also knew only too well the sorrow of watching your companions die before your eyes and unable to do anything about it. Yi Gil-Yeong must've felt the same.

"However, doing it again is going to be troublesome. You know this, don't you? With your powers…"

"…I don't want to."

"What's that?"

"If the same things happen again, I'll make the same choice. I'll rely on that power again. I'll… I'll protect Shin Yu-Seung and my companions."

"But, Gil-Yeong-ah."

He hesitated slightly before avoiding my hand. He raised his head, and I saw several complicated emotions swirling within his eyes.

It seemed that I wasn't the only one who had made up his mind.

"I know you called me here to scold me. But, I came here to tell you this, too. I'm not a

little kid anymore, hyung. I'm also qualified, you know. Just like everyone else, I reached this far by beating back all the scenarios."

I inwardly swallowed back my gasps.

I knew this already. I did, but…

[The 4th Wall]'s voice could be heard next, sounding thoroughly unimpressed by my thoughts.

「D on't tre at him l ike a kid you are mo re l ike a k id.」

'Gil-Yeong-ee is still a kid.'

「Y ou ca n't fig ht wi thout hi m an yway.」

「Kim Dok Ja, ac ting l ike a ni ce per son do esn't suit y ou.」

I knew that. But still, that didn't mean…

「D on't wo rry, my fr iend will he lp.」

…Your friend?

It was then, a transparent wall-like something wavered around Yi Gil-Yeong accompanied by 'Tsu-chuchut' noise.

['The 4th Wall' is responding to its friend.]

I cautiously reached out towards the empty air.

Something was there. This sensation of touching a wall – I was familiar with it. However, this 'wall' was still incomplete.

I finally understood several things just then.

…So, that's how it was. That 'wall' was now with this child…

"H-hyung, even if you say no, I…!"

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He must've felt scared by my hand reaching out to the empty air, because he started shouting in a shaky voice. I quickly lowered my hand and held his. I remained still while holding his hands tightly, until his shivering gradually calmed down.

"You're right, Gil-Yeong-ah."

“…Hyung?"

"I… We, can't see the Conclusion without your help. We need you during the scenario we are about to enter."

I slowly blinked my eyes.

I couldn't help it now. I had to acknowledge our current situation where I had no choice but to rely on a hurting child. I had to treat preciously the boy's heart that had to mature far too quickly for his age, and his courage he had to display first.

And to reward that courage, I too had to become honest here.

"Even if that's true, I won't let you fight all alone. This is my desire, and I won't ever back down from this. Can you understand that, Gil-Yeong-ah?"

Yi Gil-Yeong slowly nodded his head. He wiped his tears and smiled happily. My heart ached thinking about how I had to go to war with this child in tow.

Unfortunately, it was now time to cross 'that' bridge.

"I want to speak to your Sponsor."

My words caused Yi Gil-Yeong's eyes to quake quite noticeably.

“…B-but, hyung. T-that guy, it's…”

"Don't worry."

The reason why I didn't want to use his Sponsor was because that guy was simply too dangerous.

「"… Will you truly not come with me? You'll become stronger much faster if you stick with me instead of him. Even then, you wish to stay behind?"」

Yu Jung-Hyeok must've known this too and that's why he tried to take Yi Gil-Yeong away. What a fox-like sly bastard.

I gently grasped the shoulders of worried Yi Gil-Yeong and spoke. "Your hyung is now a Myth-grade Constellation, you know."

If it was a few days ago, I'd have avoided making this choice if at all possible. But the story was different now.

I lightly sucked in my breath, and while looking up, spoke in my true voice. [I know you're watching, so come out.]

The moment the tone of my voice changed, a heavy reverberation spread out around us. Sparks completely inundated the reception room and Yi Gil-Yeong's expression changed. As his brows furrowed in pain, his eyes became white next. I realised what was happening here so I quickly broke past the Probability's storm and tightly grasped the boy's shoulder.

[I don't remember telling you to descend.]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

The after-effects from the Probability's storm lessened significantly and all sorts of pain rushed into my arm. But, I ably endured it. If I didn't go with this much showmanship, then I'd not be able to negotiate properly with this guy.

[Your Status is suppressing the after-effects of a localised Probability's storm!]

Yi Gil-Yeong's expression regained its calm rapidly.

And right in the next instance, sounds akin to the beatings of insect wings came out from his mouth, currently looking as if empty darkness had taken over.

[I'm familiar with waiting, yet you have taken far too long.]

This voice sounded as if millions of locusts were crashing in at the same time.

Fin.

It had become dark outside the windows. I wondered if the sun had set already, but when I took a closer look, I realised that insects were sticking to the glasses. Locusts were glaring at me while scurrying around, their antennae swaying threateningly about.

I glanced at the plague of locusts and spoke up. [Compared to how long you had to endure, your waiting this time wouldn't have been all that much. So stop exaggerating.]

[You… what do you know… about waiting?]

The creature's words kept being cut off. Its true voice sounded like an echo spreading out from beneath the emptiness that I couldn't even fathom. The surrounding air was bubbling with pitch-black Status. I adjusted my own aura and continued to speak.

[I know that you are the 'forgotten evil', at least.]

It was here that the brows above Yi Gil-Yeong's white eyes quivered just a little. It felt as if bitterly cold air suddenly was blanketing us. I endured it and spoke again.

[The 'evil' that all the other stars have forgotten after too much time has passed by.

The 'evil' that was even ostracised by other 'evil', and was sealed away within the Demon World's deepest underground.]

Quite often, it was told that the deepest part of Hell was the dwelling of the 'Apocalypse Dragon'. The reason why the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' was so famous was because of the burning in the flames of this terrifying dragon.

The truth was, though, the Apocalypse Dragon wasn't the only calamity found in the early days of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

The calamity of the stars that swept across the worlds with yellow-coloured storm clouds of insects – amongst all the names that had disappeared, there definitely existed a calamity with this title.

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[Oh, the King of Locusts, the 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit'.]

My words prompted a vicious storm to whip about in the air as a new message revealed itself.

[Character 'Yi Gil-Yeong's' Sponsor has revealed its Modifier.]

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is now looking at you.]

The Ruler of the Deepest Pit, Abaddon.

Just like the other 'main characters' of the Great War of Saints and Demons, it too was an existence on the level of 'Myth-grade'.

However, the masters of the 'Wall Dividing Good and Evil' didn't acknowledge it as

'evil' for the sake of their own battles, and to make matters worse, didn't even let it enter the ranks of the '72 Demon Kings' of the Demon World.

And so, this being was more like an 'Outer God' now. Even though it was the 'Great Evil' that dyed the galaxy with locust plague once upon a time, this being had to spend tens of thousands of years locked away within the prison of forgotten memories.

This being was even betrayed by its own kins, the demons, while believing in the empty promise of others waking it up during the age of calamities.

「That was, until one human used 'grasshoppers' as the method to clear the scenario one day.」

[Fable, 'Grasshopper Catcher' has begun its storytelling!]

Yi Gil-Yeong's Fable that sprouted from our scenario had managed to awaken the ancient demon from its slumber.

[State your reason… for summoning me, oh the arrogant… Constellation.]

I could easily sense this demon's hidden pain from its voice filled with boundless hatred. It was ignored by its enemy, the 'Good', while it was betrayed by its supposed ally, the 'Evil'.

[What do you think? I called you here to make you stop exploiting a little kid after you

forced him into signing a contract with you.]

[…]

[If you want to sign a contract with someone, then do it with me, instead. Wouldn't that be fairer?]

[I only… forgive… your insolence… because… you… wrecked the… Great War of Saints and Demons…]

Yi Gil-Yeong's lips twisted ever so slightly to form a grin. This guy, it possessed the qualification of Great Evil, yet it decided not to participate in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' right till its conclusion. Hell, it even acted as if it didn't exist in the first place.

I kind of understood why, though. That particular Great Fable was no longer a festival meant for this creature.

[The Apocalypse Dragon and Eden… the Demon World… Watching them being destroyed was… gratifying.]

[Is that so? But, is it over with only that?]

[Over…?]

[Abaddon. You're still 'Evil'.]

My words caused Yi Gil-Yeong's brows to quiver. [The Great War… of Saints and Demons… is already… over…]

[Yeah, it has ended. But, it'll start again in the future. And the scenario where you're the calamity might get created during then. Where everyone remembers your Modifier, where everyone trembles from fear in front of your name.]

[Why… are you… saying such things?]

Abaddon smiled as if it heard rather sweet-sounding remarks.

I went straight to the topic. [Let me not beat around the bush. You've saved up enough of your strength. Now, lend us your aid.]

[And… why… should I?]

[Because even you would be annihilated if you don't. You already know very well that other Constellations will never give you the time of day after we're all gone.]

[…I am… the ancient… Evil…]

[The Constellations on the side of 'Absolute Evil' will never acknowledge you as the

'Most Ancient Evil'. No one will stand on your side. And I guess you must've forgotten it, but there is that monster, 'Baal', waiting in the 'Final Scenario', too.]

[Ba-al…!]

Abaddon's voice trembled as if it was having a seizure.

Baal – the Demon King ranked number one in the pecking order. The sole existence from the Demon World that had entered the 'Final Scenario's' area, and also the Demon King who had imprisoned Abaddon in the deepest pit, as well.

[You help us and stop the 'Great Apocalypse', then we shall grant you an opportunity to take your revenge on that guy.]

The surrounding air was trembling viciously.

I continued to withstand the Status tumbling within the air current and spoke up. [Oh, the Ruler of the Deepest Pit. Become the 'Most Ancient Evil' in the world we wish to create.]

When choosing to get in bed with the devil, you need to offer up a bait of this scale, at the least. I definitely needed Abaddon's powers in order to stop this calamity.

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[One hour and 5 minutes remaining until the start of the Great Apocalypse.]

Finally, all the preparations were complete.

I looked at my companions waiting on the side of the plaza and asked them. "Has Yu Jung-Hyeok woken up yet?"

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“…No, not yet."

Yi Seol-Hwa replied, and I nodded my head.

If he hadn't woken up yet, then we had to go with Plan B.

"I'll believe in you, everyone. We have no other choice now."

The Plan B was actually the same with A – split into two groups and each fight an

'Outer God King'. The only thing different would be the composition of each group.

"The 'Outer God' the first team will fight is the 'Living Flame'."

The Living Flame – the 'god name' of Uriel who lived during the 999th turn.

"The one appearing in the Pacific Ocean is the 'Master of the Sunken Island', but once the Great Apocalypse begins, the 'Living Flame' will definitely make her appearance.

She's targeting the 'Secretive Plotter', after all." I glanced at the sleeping 'Secretive Plotter' still trapped within the sealing sphere and continued on. "For the time being, this is the list of the participants."

Companions stared at me with tense eyes.

"Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Gil-Yeong, Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Seol-Hwa, Gong Pil-

Du, Yu Sang-Ah, Han Su-Yeong…”

The main damage dealer of this group was Jeong Hui-Won. The one possessing the strongest space restricting power was Yu Sang-Ah, while no one even came close to Han Su-Yeong's ability to conduct the battles. These three were going to form the

'mains' of the team.

Of course, that wasn't the end.

"Uriel, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, the Great Sage…”

Sparks began dancing wildly in the air as soon as I said that.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is nodding her head.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', grumbles that it doesn't wish to be

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ordered around.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is guessing your intentions.]

Since our opponent was going to be Uriel from the 999th turn, we definitely had to send out our own Uriel. If luck was on our side, we might be able to see the

[Disconnected Film Theory]'s effects once more. The Black Flame Dragon would no doubt be a great help here, and there was no need to even mention the Great Sage now that he had become a Myth-grade Constellation himself.

"I'd like Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, Kyrgios, Jang Ha-Yeong, and… the rest of the Transcenders to be their back-up, please."

"Leave it to us!"

The clearly-excited Jang Ha-Yeong shouted out after she finally got a proper mission of her own. However, her enthusiasm should take a turn for the worse once she gets there.

Both the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios nodded their heads, so I continued on. "Finally… Hades, Persephone, I'd like you two to accompany the first team, please."

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night' is silently nodding his head.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is looking at you worriedly.]

The expressions of my companions quietly listening until then finally began changing somewhat.

The first one to open her lips was Jeong Hui-Won. "Hang on a minute. Is there a need to focus all the combat personnel on the first team? Basically, everyone is in the first team, isn't it? Who will be in the second team?"

"Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Hyeon-Seong-ssi, and I will form the second team."

"What about other Constellations?"

I didn't reply to her, prompting her eyes to narrow to a slit.

"Yet another nice-sounding suicidal plan…"

I spied Yu Sang-Ah next to her smiling gently just then. R-right, if it's her, then she might side with me on this one.

[Someone is reciting the Constrictive Sutra…]

Her gentle lips began reciting something truly terrifying. I then spotted Han Su-Yeong in the distance with her hand massaging her temples while shaking her head.

'I told you, it's not going to work.'

I urgently shouted out. "H-hang on! It's not a suicidal plan. It really is a proper plan.

That's why I'm bringing along both Ji-Hye and Hyeon-Seong-ssi."

"H-mm…"

"I'm a Myth-grade Constellation now. You all saw how strong I've become earlier, didn't you?"

"Sure, we saw you hiding behind Jung-Hyeok-ssi and cheering him on."

"Please trust me. You all know what kind of an existence a Myth-grade Constellation is. It's none other than a Myth-grade! Poseidon! Zeus! The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal!

The Demon King of Salvation!"

"Sounds like something weird is mixed up in there, though…"

My companions seemed to have fallen into the trap of uncertainty after I repeated the

'Myth-grade' several more times. Indeed, the best brainwashing method was to repeat yourself.

It was then a thunderclap exploded in the sky.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is glaring at you.]

The Great Sage spent his own Probability to materialise his Incarnation body and made his grand entrance along with the flashy lightning show. His majestic platinum-hued hair danced above the Somersault Cloud.

[Maknae, have you lost your mind?]

"I-it's fine to send an indirect message, you know… You need to conserve your Probability…"

[Not all Myth-grades are equal 'myths'. You're just a hatchling who has stepped into this domain only recently.]

This was my first time seeing the Great Sage come out this forcefully, and that flustered me somewhat. I deliberated on my options, before sighing out grandly and told everyone the truth.

"…I too don't believe the combined strengths of the second team will be enough to kill a King."

"Then, what were you planning to do?!"

"The core of our plan this time is 'blitzkrieg'."

Currently, we didn't have Yu Jung-Hyeok, the core of the second team, with us. If we couldn't borrow the powers of the 1863rd regression turn, then didn't matter how the teams were split up, we still didn't have any guarantee of victory.

Just one mistake, then forget about dividing and conquering our enemies, we'd get conquered, instead. In that case, there was only one way remaining to ensure everyone's survival.

"The survival of the second team is dependent on the first. You must defeat the 'Living Flame' as speedily as possible and head to the Pacific Ocean. The goal of my team, Ji-Hye, Hyeon-Seong-ssi, and I, is to endure until all of you come and join us."

This was the first stage in the plan that I came up with.

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30 minutes later, Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Hyeon-Seong, and myself disembarked to the Pacific Ocean. Right up until our departure, my companions were trying to change my mind, but I simply shook my head at them.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island' managed to destroy the American continent simply by rising up. If we waited for that guy to get closer to the Korean Peninsula, then every single nearby island would be destroyed even before the battle got underway.

Going out to face our enemy head-on was the right call even when considering the accompanying risk.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is reading the water route with a deeply meaningful stare.]

Both Yi Ji-Hye and Yi Hyeon-Seong looked quite tense. Especially the latter, as he was returning to scenarios after a period of absence. His expression was far more solemn than before.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is busy polishing his head.]

[Constellation, 'King Heungmu', is saddened by the fate of the Korean Peninsula.]

The [Turtle Dragon] scythed past the ocean waves to go past the islands of Ulleundo and Dokdo.

Perhaps the sights of the latter left an impression on him, because Yi Hyeon-Seong suddenly placed his hand on his chest and shouted out. "… We shall protect our motherland!"

[Constellation, 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol' is nodding his head.]

I found it a bit hard to watch such a serious declaration, so I promptly went for a tackle.

"… Hyeon-Seong-Ssi, you said you quit being a soldier, didn't you?"

"It's not just soldiers that protect our nation, you know."

He muttered his reply and looked down at his dog tags with sorrowful eyes. Before we parted ways from the rest of the companions, Jeong Hui-Won fidgeted around with those tags for a long time before letting him go.

- You must stay alive, no matter what. Understand?

Yi Hyeon-Seong, now with a face of an innocent little bull, looked up into the sky and nodded his head.

Yi Ji-Hye watched this spectacle unfold and whispered something in my ear. "Ahjussi, why does this feel like our death flag?"

“…We'll be fine. If anyone's dying today, it'll be Hyeon-Seong-ssi only."

"By the way, will just us two, me and Hyeon-Seong ahjussi, really be alright?"

"Ng."

I spread out a sheet on the ship's deck while explaining myself. This sheet was a DIY

item I bought just now from the [Dokkaebi Bundle]. My new goal was to complete this thing before we encounter our new enemy.

"I don't get it, though? Sure, I get why with Hyeon-Seong ahjussi, but me? Is it because we're on the sea?"

"Something like that."

"But, my Sponsor is a Historical… No, a Fable-grade. But, you clearly said that even a Myth-grade can't stop the guy about to show up, didn't you?"

For sure, what she said was correct. The Maritime War God was an excellent Constellation, sure, but he was a long way off from being referred to as 's greatest Constellation.

"It's not the General, but you that I believe in."

“…Eh?"

"The Constellation being a Fable-grade doesn't mean his Incarnation is also a Fable-grade, you see."

Yi Ji-Hye blinked her eyes as if she didn't really get it, but eventually, a smirk formed on her lips. "What are you on about? I'm not even a Constellation, you know."

Well, true, you aren't one now.

Yi Ji-Hye had no idea of her own potential. She had no clue just how far she reached back in the original story.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', nods his head after hearing your words.]

Perhaps the General was already well aware of it.

Yi Hyeon-Seong finished shooting the solo performance of Romeo and Juliet, and approached us. "By the way, Dok-Ja-ssi? What have you been making until now?"

"Ah, this?"

I showed him the item I'd been making. Its explanation immediately popped up when I did.

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Name: The White Flag of Complete Surrender

Grade: SSS

Explanation: It's a surprising item that allows the enemy to see your surrender from very far away. Be careful to not let your allies discover you using it.

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Yi Hyeon-Seong formed a disbelieving expression as if he had seen something weird and rubbed his eyes a few times before he looked at me.

I grinned back. "I told you, I'm not planning to die this time."

"B-but, this, isn't this…"

"The moment you see them, we must surrender. Then we try to talk to them.

Understand? Fighting won't buy us any time whatsoever. As soon as they show up…"

"Ahjussi! Something's coming!"

Almost at the same time with Yi Ji-Hye's cry, we all spotted a ginormous wall approaching us from the horizon. It was a wall of waves reaching hundreds of metres high. That wall was steadily encroaching upon us.

[You have entered the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' area prematurely!]

[You're recommended to exit the scenario area immediately!]

[If you fail to exit, the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' will begin!]

Of course, I wasn't planning to leave.

[Hidden Scenario – 'Great Apocalypse' has begun!]

[The invasion of 'Outer Gods' has commenced!]

[Please survive this calamity!]

The moment the scenario explanation ended, the gigantic waves of Status crashed into us. This Status was so great that all the hair on my body was standing up real high, even though I was supposed to be a

'Myth-grade Constellation' now.

「The calamity that not even stars can't survive. This is the 'Great Apocalypse'.」

The march of the 'Outer Gods', for the annihilation of a world.

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling.]

I unleashed the appropriate Fable to protect my companions and looked up at the wall of waves. The howl of the 'Outer God' resounded out from somewhere.

The 'Outer Gods' were piled up like layers in between the waves.

And a lone battleship rode on top of this wall as if to reign over it. The vessel was an intimately familiar shape. The dragon-shaped figurehead spat out a violent lick of flames.

The [Turtle Dragon].

That was definitely the Turtle Dragon. If one wanted to point out the obvious difference between that one and our own Turtle Dragon, then the enemy's was at least twenty times larger.

"A-ahjussi…"

The frightened Yi Ji-Hye was now staring at me, her expression asking me if I knew this already.

I nodded my head. I wasn't 100% sure, but did expect this to happen. I knew the list of survivors from the 999th turn better than anyone, after all.

「The calamity of the western world, the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.」

Beyond the waves splitting up, we could hear the voice of a certain girl who had witnessed the 999th turn's 'Conclusion'.

[[Load the cannons.]]

Fin.

The moment the shelling began, I grabbed Yi Ji-Hye. It felt as if the entire world had us in its crosshairs. Our ship quickly turned its heading. I could only pray that she wasn't too late.

[[Fire.]]

Kwa-aaaaaaaah!!

The ear-rending cacophony of cannon firing noises filled up the entire great ocean.

Foams around us evaporated into steam. With almost no room left, the [Turtle Dragon]

managed to turn around in time. Even then, we couldn't dodge everything.

"Hyeon-Seong-ssi!"

As the acrid burning smell filled up our noses, the Fable metal quickly branched out and covered up the entirety of the deck. Soon, it covered the entire hull and started glowing in white-hot heat. So hot, in fact, one's skin would be cooked instantly. As the impact force on the outer layer of the metal decreased, Yi Hyeon-Seong undid the

[Steel Transformation].

When we saw the sky again, we realised that our ship was falling to the bottom as if the ground beneath had disappeared. I quickly activated [Demon King Transformation], spread out my wings, and shouted out.

"Yi Ji-Hye!!"

She hurriedly grabbed the helm and controlled the movement of the ship. Flames lit up below the hull and the [Turtle Dragon] began flying.

Only after securing our balance were we able to take stock of our surroundings. Just what the hell happened here…?

「And then, Kim Dok-Ja couldn't close his slack jaw.」

A ship in the middle of the ocean suddenly fell to the ground – meaning, the water supporting that ship had disappeared.

Ku-gugugugu!

The great ocean had been split in half and its deep, dark bottom was now fully exposed. Aquatic creatures were flapping around painfully down there, and we could see the horde of 'Outer Gods' gleefully tearing into those helpless creatures.

[Gyahaaaaaah!]

The swarm of Outer Gods were running on the bottom of the ocean, their bodies wriggling like worms. From either side of the now-dry ocean, the huge tsunami waves were flooding in.

"Move! Hurry!"

I shouted out and Yi Ji-Hye urgently turned the ship around again.

[[Load the cannons]].

It was then that we heard the noises of cannons being loaded for the second time. Just hearing that true voice alone instilled fear deep into the very marrows of our bones.

I raised my head and saw Yi Hyeon-Seong sweating buckets as well. Even if it was the

[Fable metal], it wouldn't be able to withstand attacks of such calibre too many times.

"Ahjussi! Do something!"

I was planning to act, anyway.

I finished my crappy construction effort on the [The White Flag of Complete Surrender] and raised it up high.

[Item, 'The White Flag of Complete Surrender', is activating!]

[Now your enemies should be able to spot your complete surrender from even afar!]

[A portion of Constellations are shocked by your action!]

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[A small number of Constellations are pointing accusatory fingers at your cowardice!]

Cowardice, my foot. You haven't even bothered to show up here.

I used all of my strength to wave this white flag around.

"Yi Ji-Hye! Over here!"

I called out, yet no reply came back my way.

No, the one to tackle me down figuratively was our own Yi Ji-Hye,

instead. "Ahjussi, have you gone insane??"

"It might not look it, but this item is an SSS-grade."

"There's no guarantee of us surviving just because we surrendered, you know!"

"Well, Yi Ji-Hye on that side could be a kind girl. Let's believe in that."

"How can you crack jokes in this kind of situation??"

Unfortunately, I wasn't joking.

The cannons finished reloading and just as they began emitting light, I diligently waved my white flag and shouted out my prepared speech. "Oiii, Yi Ji-Hye! Did your master teach you to attack the opponents waving white flags??"

Ku-gu…

And then, that side stopped moving for the first time ever. The fully-loaded cannons had stopped just before they could fire. The thick, grey steam dissipated to reveal a lone figure standing on the deck.

It was the Outer God, the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.

Yi Ji-Hye from the 999th turn was standing there, her long hair dancing in the wind.

Even though she had lived an unaccountable amount of time, her looks were still in the 20s. It was as if her time had frozen still in the moments of the 999th regression turn's 'Conclusion'.

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As if she wanted to count the emptiness of that time, her lips began parting slowly.

[[Flag…]]

"That's right, this flag. You remember it?"

Old pages were flipping past within me. Scenes from the 999th turn were being replayed – the intense stench of blood, the eerie darkness of the subway…

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

[Attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', is activating!]

[Your words have awoken the ancient Fable within your opponent!]

「Within that darkness stood Yu Jung-Hyeok.」

Sparks burst out from the shattered, broken headlights of the train; the light flickering intermittently illuminated Yu Jung-Hyeok's sword slaughtering the monsters.

「On that day, the wounded Sword Demon met the Conquering King.」

The Sword Demon shuddered after seeing his sword easily rip through the enemies she had so much trouble fighting until then. Yi Ji-Hye shouted out, her eyes chasing after the sword's trajectory that seemed to disappear in pure disinterest.

「"If I follow after you, can I become stronger, too? Then, will I be able to survive in this stinking world?!"」

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Sparks danced violently before my eyes. The vicious storm of Probability's aftermath was so powerful that I couldn't even see my front properly.

The incoming aquatic creatures and 'Outer Gods' targeting us got sucked into the sparks and writhed in pain.

[Whatsthiswhatsthiswhatsthiswhatsthis]

'Outer Gods' turned to look at their 'King'. However, their king was no longer standing

there. As if she was lost within the distant memories, the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was reaching out towards the empty air.

[[Mas… ter…]]

As I thought.

I got this impression the first time I met the 'Secretive Plotter' as well as 999th turn's Uriel, that… These people, they were clearly out of their minds.

[Character, 'Master of the Sunken Island', is painfully baring her teeth.]

When an existence became an 'Outer God', normally this being would end up as a completely different existence. It'd lose the memories of the life it lived and be reborn as a brand new creature.

However, that was the story reserved for the regular 'Outer Gods'; 'Kings' played by different rules. They retained the memories and emotions of their previous lives.

The 'Secretive Plotter' divided his Fable into different regression turns and stored them that way, while the 'Living Flame' shoved her own sense of self into her vengeful obsession.

In that case, what was it like for the 'Master of the Sunken Island'?

Was she able to remember who she used to be?

"Yi Ji-Hye! Please remember who you once were!"

I wasn't sure why the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye became an 'Outer God'. However, I could think of one possibility.

"Don't destroy this 'worldline', please! This place is the same as the world you used to live in! Yu Jung-Hyeok is here, so is Yi Hyeon-Seong, and so are you, Yi Ji-Hye!"

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[is closely observing your actions.]

[A portion of Great Dokkaebis are frowning at your actions.]

Fables from the 999th turn began flowing in front of my eyes.

"Don't close your eyes! Make sure you see who you're about to kill!"

「"Don't close your eyes. Make sure to remember who your sword is about to kill.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok as how the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye remembered him stood there, the man who taught her the ways of the sword and how to survive. The [Struggle for the Flag] began, and after taking over the Chungmuro Station, he said this to her.

「"Remember the deaths of those you've killed. This might hurt you, but that way, you'll avoid becoming a Sword Demon."」

Yu Jung-Hyeok's flag, still white and untainted, slowly wavered in that place. It'd become red, then black, later. Yi Ji-Hye looked at the flag proudly gleaning on that man's back and thought to herself.

「I wish to become someone like him.」

That was something I also thought about often.

[Character, 'Master of the Sunken Island's' Fable is violently shaking!]

I didn't miss this opening and continued to fire my salvo like a machine gun. I spat out the events of the 999th turn that I remembered without a shred of hesitation. "Have you forgotten everything that Yu Jung-Hyeok taught you back then? Let the ones surrendering early go! Those who scheme behind your back are usually the smart ones! We're short on manpower, so we need to utilise even such people, too!"

Yi Ji-Hye's jaw fell as she watched me from the side. She must've had no clue that I'd come out and persuade our enemy in this manner. Didn't really matter if they slagged me off for being a coward as I simply had no choice. I had to resort to stimulating the memories from the original novel since buying time was the utmost priority for us. I didn't have any guarantee that this method would work, anyway.

[[Fire]].

…Goddammit, so that little wasn't enough, huh.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

The second shelling commenced.

Although the firepower this time was weaker, the destructive power behind the attack was still too much for us to meet it head-on. The only saving grace was that, rather than 'one big shot', the attack was in the form of scattered rounds, instead.

I watched the shells cross the vast ocean and bit my lips, hard. "Hyeon-Seong-ssi!"

“…I'm not finished with my preparations!"

Was it because he had to lend the [Fable metal] to our companions, too? Yi Hyeon-Seong's magical energy recovery rate was extremely slow. The forged steel covering the vessel was only about half compared to before.

Meaning, we need to withstand this 'turn' without the help from the [Steel Transformation].

The [Turtle Dragon] began retreating with every ounce of energy in order to dodge the scattered shells. However, Yi Ji-Hye moved in contrast to the ship's direction and stood in front to protect both Yi Hyeon-Seong and me.

"Ahjussis, stand behind me. I'll do whatever I can about this."

Her unexpected words made me take another look at her. With an unfamiliar light in her eyes, she was studying the frontline.

"This fight… It's my fight."

I didn't know what made her move, but one thing's for certain – Yi Ji-Hye had chosen her battlefield.

"I don't know what the hell this 999th turn is nor what happened in that place.

However, if there is another 'me' trying to destroy this world with the pretext of tragedy from another regression turn…" Ghostly flames burned fiercely within her eyes after she had made up her mind. "I will never forgive another 'me'."

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is unleashing his Status!]

I quietly stared at her.

The oceans were the most optimal battlefield for her.

The only things I could trust right now were Yi Ji-Hye and her battleship.

[Nebula 's Probability is permeating within the Incarnation,

'Yi Ji-Hye'!]

The Great Fables I possessed poured in all of their Status into her. Blinding golden aura enveloped her body.

She opened her eyes wide, before smiling refreshingly at me. "Thanks, ahjussi."

Yi Ji-Hye's battleship dashed forward.

The [Turtle Dragon] evaded the arcs of the incoming scattered shells and spat out flames from its figurehead.

"All troops, advance!"

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun talking a big game!]

The flames spat out by the small dragon figurehead collided with the shell fired from the other side and evaporated. The history we lived together became the Fable and was colliding against the 999th turn's Fable.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is aiding the Incarnation 'Yi Ji-Hye'.]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

If one looked at the destructive power of Great Fables alone, then our side shouldn't get pushed around by your run-of-the-mill Nebulas.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', has ceded his command to his Incarnation.]

[Character 'Yi Ji-Hye' is activating 'Ghost Fleet Lv.???'!]

Her speciality, the Ghost Fleet, finally revealed themselves above the great ocean's waters. Each of these vessels had grown past the size of a cruiser and were now almost

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reaching that of an aircraft carrier. They escorted the [Turtle Dragon] and spat out flames in synch with each other.

"Load the cannons!"

Yi Ji-Hye's Ghost Fleet started their speedy forward march.

Unfortunately, that side started firing first.

Waves of flames rushed in over the vast expanse of the ocean. The fleet headed straight into the wave. The gigantic wall of water blocked our front, but her eyes were focused only on a single point.

"Fire!"

The concentrated firing caused one side of the wave to explode. The fleet dug into that small opening and continued to advance. Her fleet, now in the straight-line formation, then opened fire in all directions.

Outer Gods struck down by the cannons cried out in pain. Yi Ji-Hye trampled on those screams and continued to advance forward again and again.

She even vomited out blood after using an excessive amount of magical energy, yet she never let go of the helm.

「Even if it's just one shot.」

Yi Ji-Hye's eyes emitting chilling glow were still fixed on one point. On a certain battleship waiting beyond the thick wall of waves.

[[Load the cannons.]]

"Load the cannons!"

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye'.]

[Constellation, 'King Heungmu', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye'.]

[Constellation, 'Joseon's First Sorcerer', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye'.]

[Constellation, 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-

Hye'.]

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Maitreya', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye'.]

[Constellation, 'Seo-Ae Single Stroke of Brush', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye'.]

The Korean Peninsula's Constellations were now looking at her.

While watching her pierce her way through this overwhelmingly disadvantageous combat situation, I began recalling a certain page from the now-ancient original novel.

[Character 'Yi Ji-Hye's' attribute evolution is imminent!]

Her final attribute evolution, something she also experienced during the original, was about to occur right before my eyes. Such a thing was possible only because of the current situation.

The Probabilities lent to her by the Korean Peninsula's Constellations, her own Fable that she had accumulated with abnormal speed, and finally, Yi Ji-Hye's determination to even risk death all combined to create this miracle.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is looking at his Incarnation.]

From the distant skies, Yi Ji-Hye's Sponsor, the 'Maritime War God', was looking down at her. He was the Constellation that protected and advised her for the longest time.

I knew what he was thinking right now; I could sense it, because I was also a star like him. He was currently experiencing an event that only the smallest number of Constellations would ever encounter.

「The event of an Incarnation exceeding the Status of her Sponsor.」

This should be what the Maritime War God must've realised – that the time had come for him to acknowledge the truth; that now was the time to let go of his own Incarnation from his embrace.

「And so – the oceans desired one Monarch to rule over the violent storms.」

The Maritime War God recited the Fable as if he was sending the

congratulatory

message to a young bird taking to the skies for the first time.

「Therefore, there is no need for two Monarchs in this great ocean.」

[Character 'Yi Ji-Hye's' attribute is evolving!]

[Character 'Yi Ji-Hye' has acquired the legendary-grade attribute!]

Finally, the wounded Sword Demon was advancing towards her own ocean.

[Character 'Yi Ji-Hye's' attribute has evolved to the 'Monarch of the Great Sea'!]

[[Fire.]]

"Fire!!"

As the ear-deafening cannon firing resounded out, everything before our eyes was enveloped by the blinding flash of light.

Fin.

[[Mari… time War… God…]]

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye showed some reaction as if she had finally remembered her Sponsor.

「During the 999th regression turn, the 'Maritime War God' sacrificed himself to save Yi Ji-Hye.」

Perhaps to deny everything that happened during this turn, the powerful naval bombardment continued on. However, our own Yi Ji-Hye also responded in kind.

「All of the Korean Peninsula's Constellations were with Yi Ji-Hye.」

The Monarch of the Great Sea – the realm Yi Ji-Hye reached only during the extreme-latter part of the 'Ways of Survival', well past the 1800th regression turns.

She reached the highest position that a human could ever reach and leapfrogged her own Sponsor to eventually become a god of the oceans.

「At least when on water, she was confident of not being pushed around by any Myth-grade Constellations.」

She actually said those words, and they even became reality later, too – during the original storyline, she fought the Myth-grade Constellation Poseidon on an equal footing, at least when they were on the sea.

"Fire!!"

[Attribute 'Monarch of the Great Sea's' effects are activating!]

The storm whipped up from behind Yi Ji-Hye. Waves split up and firestorm raged on the path she scythed through. It was as if these violent winds were trying to escort her

ship. She stood at the forefront of these winds and carried on with the shelling.

[Exclusive skill, 'Ghost Fleet Lv.???' is continuing to fight back!]

And then, the giant wall of waves gradually split up.

[Mo nar ch of the Gre at Sea]

[Twotwotwotwotwotwo]

Even the 'Outer Gods' following that side looked to be flustered now.

「The Monarch of the Great Sea will never be defeated on water.」

That was the accepted rule within the 'Ways of Survival'. I believed in those words and that allowed us to come this far. However…

"Keuk…"

Along with 'Pu-shu-shuk!' noise, streams of blood shot out from Yi Ji-Hye's nose and mouth. Her excessively-boiling magical energy had begun flowing backwards. Not only that…

[Attribute 'Monarch of the Great Sea's' effects are activating!]

That message wasn't caused by the Status from our side.

I thought something was rushing in at us, and in the blink of an eye, powerful headwinds completely flipped our vision. The [Ghost Fleet] and [Turtle Dragon] were sucked into the humongous wave and flailed about within the rising foams.

"Ji-Hye-ya!"

Yi Ji-Hye was flung away like a kite with its strings cut. I reached out and grasped her wrist. My magical energy helped her to regain her consciousness, and she somersaulted in the air before landing back on the deck.

She gritted her teeth and while grabbing the helm, shouted out. "I told you to run away!"

"I can't do that."

For the current Yi Ji-Hye alone, this was asking for too much. Even if she had become the 'Monarch of the Great Sea', our opponent had already attained the Status of that very title a long time ago and now was even an Outer God, as well.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Due to the blessings from the Great Apocalypse scenario, this calamity had exceeded even the Myth-grade Constellations. That was precisely who we were confronting right now.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is crying out as if in pain!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is resisting against the myth!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is revealing itself.]

Three 'Great Fables' began telling their stories at the same time.

Since a portion of the Great Fables' shares was being used by the first team, we couldn't utilise their full powers here. However, we still had enough to provoke our opponent.

[[You are…]]

Was my goal of using the white flag to stimulate her memories finally paying off?

Certain aspects of emotions carried within her true voice were different from before.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Character, 'Master of the Sunken Island', is staring at the Great Fable.]

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

Finally, the moments I was waiting for had come. Fables built up by two different Yi Ji-Hyes collided and the disconnected film threads began connecting to each other.

If everything goes well, we should be able to buy ourselves a bit of time through this phenomenon. It was then that the scenery before us suddenly changed.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

「This is the Fable of Dok-Ja (only son).」

「[Please survive.]」

「"Ahjussi!! Don't! Stop it! I said, stop…!"」

These were the memories from when we fought off the 'Indescribable Distance' for the first time. As if simply recalling them was too painful for her, Yi Ji-Hye quickly averted her gaze.

…Ah, so she made such an expression back then.

I too could vividly recall those memories.

In order to transport the entirety of the [Industrial Complex], I made a deal with the

'Secretive Plotter' and fought against that calamity.

[[You are…]]

However, the expression of the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was crumpling as well. Another Fable unfolded itself before our eyes next.

[Great Fable, 'Wanderer of the Eternal Horizon', has begun its storytelling.]

That was the Fable belonging to the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye.

The scenery of Seoul, destroyed by Nebulas sneak attacking it, appeared before us.

Next up was the unconscious companions, and finally, the crumbling outer wall of the castle.

On top of this wall, the one-eyed Yu Jung-Hyeok and his lone arm were staring at the battlefield.

「"… This is the only way."」

The jet-black aura of Chaos began rising up from his figure.

「"Master! Stop! I said, stop!!"」

I knew exactly which scene this was. This was where 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok died.

His soul, now in tatters after the 'Outer World Pledge' he signed with the Outer God was repeatedly invoked, was making his very last trade.

Seoul was now sinking into the deepest bowels of the ocean.

Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke. 「"You must survive."」

And then… the 999th turn's memories were scattering away beyond the misty, grey foams. From the two eyes of the expression girl, the 'Master of the Sunken Island', something began trickling down. Certain Fables wouldn't disappear even when subjected to the untold amount of time. Such a Fable made her come this far.

"Ahjussi, isn't that…"

I looked to my side and saw our Yi Ji-Hye also crying.

"Isn't it… too similar…?"

[Two 'Great Fables' are responding to each other.]

Of course, the stories had to be similar.

「Kim Dok-Ja believed that the most perfect regression turn was the '999th'. And… 」

And, I took that turn as my motif, after all.

「That regression turn was the closest out of all the others that came close to the correct conclusion.」

It was the only regression turn where everyone survived and got to witness the Conclusion.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

As the storm of aftermath raged on, the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was approaching us. The distance closed in with each step taken. I was getting a bad vibe from this.

"Ahjussi, hurry and fall back!"

Our Yi Ji-Hye also sensed the incoming danger and unsheathed the Twin Dragon Sword before dashing forward.

The [Instant Kill] – it was the best anti-human combat skill she possessed.

Unfortunately, the streak of swordlight slicing forward was deflected away in the empty air as the harsh, screeching noise resounded out. And our Yi Ji-Hye was flung away across the deck, arcs of her blood scattering about.

"Ji-Hye-ya!!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong on standby quickly caught her.

Just as I sighed in relief, the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye stopped right before my nose. Even before I could unshackle my Fable and unleash my Status, her pale yet strong right hand grabbed hold of my collars.

[[You… Who are you?]]

…Yup, like master, like disciple.

I could only smile wryly.

In any case, the fact that we could now converse wasn't such a bad development.

"My name is Kim Dok-Ja. Your master's best friend."

[[… Best friend??]]

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye now formed a confused expression. She then began staring at the Fable circling around me.

「"Before you start fighting them, you must search the left-side wall. Then, you'll immediately realise what I'm trying to say to you."」

「"I'm telling you this now so that you can fight against the 'Sasquatch' during the 28th scenario."」

My Fable was now left wide open for her to read.

[[But, how did you…?]]

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「"I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok."」

[[… Master?]]

She must've been beset with confusion, as she used her left hand to massage her temples. Her eyes were burning with ominous aura.

Ku-dududu…!

Her grip on my collars was getting stronger. Ripples of her Status tightened around my body and I began having trouble breathing.

"H-hang on second. Why don't you let me go and…!"

[[Mastermastermastermastermaster]]

Outer Gods flooding in parroted her words. With the most sorrowful language known to man, they cried out instead of the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye. They sounded as if their vocal cords were tearing apart, as if their whole existence was crumbling away.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint', is activating!]

[All of your Fables are sympathising with the applicable individual.]

[Your degree of understanding on the applicable individual is increasing rapidly!]

Her eyes now reflected the moments we had lived in the past.

From the , to ; from the to the . And then…

[Fable, 'Square Circle', has begun its storytelling.]

「"You can talk to me any time. If you don't want to talk to me, then it'll be fine with someone else, too. But you don't have to huddle in a corner and let it fester inside you."」

I now could see the face of the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye distorting in great sorrow. Why did that remind me of the 'Secretive Plotter'?

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「[[Why, why is it not me, but you??]]」

To the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye, the 'Master of the Sunken Island', what did this story mean to her?

Would she also hate me?

To the lives of this world-line, built upon the history of her and her companions that I read…

「I'm envious.」

…What?

Tsu-chuchuchut!

As if she was looking at something she had been longing for all eternity, the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye slowly reached out and placed her palm on my cheek.

Even if it was the same story, the impression one got after reading it would be different from people to people. Some might despair after seeing the story he had failed to achieve, while someone else might feel consoled having seen the sorrow that closely resembled hers. The only issue here would be with where that consolation effort might go next.

「I want to have it.」

Her eyes soaked in ancient sorrow suddenly were filled with streaks of madness. The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye slowly turned her head. Her gaze was now locked firmly on the unconscious Yi Ji-Hye.

「I too, want to live this kind of life.」

Only then did I realise what this girl was thinking of in her head.

The [Disconnected Film Theory] was writhing violently. The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye reached out, and the vicious air current flew out to envelop our unconscious Yi Ji-Hye.

This was dangerous.

[The Fables of two beings are starting to resonate!]

Accompanied by the 'Euh-jeo-jeok!' noise, the 999th turn's Fable began moving. That Fable was now devouring the Fable from our world-line. I freaked out and hurriedly unleashed my Status.

I needed to stop this. No matter what, I must never let the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye devour…

Kwa-dudududu!

Forged steel broke out from the ship's deck and extended in the blink to protect both me and our Yi Ji-Hye. It was Yi Hyeon-Seong's doing. However, I sensed that something was different about the Fable's aura coming from the steel barrier. I shifted my gaze towards him.

Yi Hyeon-Seong was there, but it was not him. Someone had borrowed his body to unleash his powers.

[Incarnation 'Yi Hyeon-Seong's' Sponsor is protecting you!]

This Status was strong enough to evenly match the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.

The steel wall was ripped apart with loud tearing noises and the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye poked her head through. As if she had been doused by cold water, her expression was hardened to a frightening degree.

The first one to open his lips was Yi Hyeon-Seong's Sponsor.

[[Ji-Hye-ya. Our story had come to an end a long time ago already.]]

That was the true voice of an Outer God.

And I realised whose it was instantly.

*

At the same time.

Han Myeong-Oh, having purchased another [X-grade Ferrarghini] with Coins he borrowed from Kim Dok-Ja, was hurriedly driving on the dimensional road. His destination was the sealed-off 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

"Da-Reum-ah! If you can hear my voice, please answer me! Da-Reum-ah!"

Han Da-Reum – that was the name he had given to his daughter. He continued to wander around all corners of the Dark Stratum and called out that name.

"Da-Reum-ah!!!"

And eventually, he discovered a familiar hand poking out from in between the distorted darkness.

He couldn't not recognise that hand. He had never let go of that hand, right up until she was snatched away by the Demon King.

Han Myeong-Oh held it tightly. And then, he began extracting his daughter's body from the layers of darkness. It wasn't an easy job, but he couldn't give up on it.

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

The 's Fable he borrowed in order to find his daughter began to tell its story. And he managed to extract her body bit by bit from the layer.

Fortunately, her Incarnation Body was intact. Not so fortunately, though, her heart wasn't beating. However, he had in his possession a single [Life and Death Pill] he got from Yi Seol-Hwa.

"Da-Reum-ah! Please wake up! It's your dad! Your dad's here for you!"

Han Myeong-Oh called out while crying. And so – how long passed by like this? Finally, Han Da-Reum opened her eyes. Reddish light leaked out from her irises, however.

[…You did well, my dependent.]

What opened its eyes wasn't Han Da-Reum.

[…The 'Guidance of the End' almost came to an end itself during the Great War of Saints and Demons.]

The ominous Status of a Demon King could be felt now. Asmodeus formed a crazed smile, causing Han Myeong-Oh to fall on his butt.

"G-give my daughter back to me! My daughter…!"

[Daughter? H-mm… My apologies, but that will be too difficult. I definitely need this Incarnation Body, you see. However, allow me to gift you with a nice present, instead.]

Asmodeus spoke up to there and pulled out a pitch-black eye patch from its inner pocket.

[The qualification to watch the end of this world-line with me, that is.]

This was an ancient item that had been passed down among the 'Guiders of the End'.

An item that could be used only when the Final Scenario was just around the corner.

[Item, 'Relic of the Abyss', is activating!]

The 'Other World Incantation' meant to summon the Outer God dyed in the abyss, the

'Demon of 999'. Asmodeus exploded in a fit of maniacal laughter as it watched the dimension distort visibly. [Metatron! Agares! Demon King of Salvation!! This story won't end the way you think it will! This story, it will-!"

[[What the hell is this?]]

Since when did this happen? There was a man standing behind Asmodeus. He was enveloped in the jet-black aura, while bandages were wrapped around in one of his arms.

Han Myeong-Oh watching this scene unfold five, six steps away began trembling uncontrollably. He recognised the face of this unknown man.

This mysterious man met his gaze and smiled. [[… Oh, so you have summoned me?

Hmm… what's this? There's a Demon King here, too? Aha, I get it. This Demon King was busy bullying you, and you summoned me to save you, right?]]

[Oh, the End! That's not true! It is I, Asmodeus, that have summoned you to…]

Swiiiish!

The man's translucent hand reached out and grabbed the back of Asmodeus's neck.

And a second later, the Demon King's soul form was captured by the man.

[Keo-heok…??]

[[I don't trust the words of those hiding in other people's bodies.]]

Asmodeus's soul was then torn to shreds along with the loud 'Pu-hwa-hack!' noise.

The attack didn't even give the Demon King a chance to resist. The man licked the tattered Fable of a demon and grinned brightly.

[[I hate Demon Kings the most. They always try to imitate me. I mean, look! This bastard, he even had the eye patch that I misplaced somewhere, you know?]]

The man muttered to himself and pulled the eye patch off Asmodeus's

former Incarnation Body before putting it on himself. He grinned brightly as if he was satisfied by his own appearance now. Meanwhile, the trembling Han Myeong-Oh hurriedly hugged the fallen body of his daughter and looked up at this man.

[[Oii, oii, don't worry, man. I may look a bit scary, but once you get to know me better, you'll learn that I'm actually a nice guy inside.]] The man vigorously tapped on his bandages and spoke up. [[Well, then… Shall I go and find my Ji-Hye now?]]

Fin.

The forged steel expanded and protected both me and Yi Ji-Hye.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel' is revealing his Status.]

Yi Hyeon-Seong's Sponsor was the original 'Master of Steel'. However, he was killed off during the incident the last time. Before that, though, he managed to successfully hand his Modifier over to someone else.

[[King of Silverlight Heart.]]

The King of Silverlight Heart, that was the new 'Master of Steel'. He was yet another existence who witnessed the 999th turn's Conclusion, alongside the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.

And it was none other than Yi Hyeon-Seong from the 999th turn.

[[Stop with your ridiculous charade as a Sponsor. What do you think you're doing?]]

Was it because she was facing another 'King' like her? The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was rapidly regaining her reasoning.

[[You kept silent when we were calling for you, so why are you appearing like this now?]]

The 'Master of the Sunken Island' continued on.

[[It was you who suggested that we follow the rules. We promised to find our stories again even if that meant we'd become the apocalypse of another world. To get our scenarios back from the … That's what you suggested, right?]]

The Fables flowing near them helped me to guess what their lives had been like.

「Ji-Hye-ya. We must stick to the rules. Even if we become the 'Outer Gods', do not

forget that rule.」

「Only that rule will protect you when the world tries to inflict you with pain.」

「It'll speak up for you – that you are not wrong.」

Just like how Yi Ji-Hyes from different regression turns were still Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Hyeon-Seongs found in the same turns were also undoubtedly, Yi Hyeon-Seong. Even after he became an Outer God, his original nature didn't change.

The 'King of Silverlight Heart' stared at me next. I couldn't decipher the emotions contained within his gaze.

[[This is my rule, Ji-Hye-ya. To prevent the re-enactment of the 999th turn's tragedy.]]

[[What rubbish are you talking about? Is 'rules' something you can easily change on a whim like flipping your hand around??]]

[[I've heard several stories from my Sponsor who used to live this world-line. In some ways… this world-line could very well be the one we've been searching for.]] The 'King of Silverlight Heart' was glowing coldly as he spoke. [[The world-line where the 'end'

of everything could be witnessed.]]

Those words caused the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye to hesitate. [[Such a world-line can't exist. Besides, this world-line is about to end, anyway. Even if you interfere, even if I stop…]]

It seemed that the 'King of Silverlight Heart' chose not to become the calamity of the

'Great Apocalypse'. I expected something like that, though. If he really was thinking of harming us, then he'd have done so back in the .

And since I knew that, I decided to bring our Yi Hyeon-Seong here. As a final hidden card prepared for that one off-chance.

[[These people aren't that weak. Uriel alone won't make it.]]

The 'King of Silverlight Heart' ended his words there. The 'Master of the Sunken Island'

then replied, her empty, wandering eyes staring at the distant horizon. But then, life returned to her eyes right next moment, with an expression of someone who saw

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something quite unpleasant.

[[What if she's not alone?]]

And then, pitch-black darkness blanketed the world beyond the

horizon.

Something we failed to foresee was revealing itself over yonder.

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The rest of 's companions were camping out near Dokdo Island, waiting for 'something' to show up.

A short while after Kim Dok-Ja had disappeared towards the Pacific Ocean, they started hearing the drumbeat-like noises bellowing out from there every so often.

They flinched every time they heard those noises. No one said anything about their intermittent flinching movement, but they all knew what it meant, anyway.

'I want to go and help Kim Dok-Ja.'

However, they endured it. This was all part of their strategy. If they carelessly made a move here, then forget about saving Kim Dok-Ja, they might end up losing everything, instead. They simply had to stick to the plan. According to the plan, this place was…

Ku-gugugugu.

It was right then they felt the heat coming from the sky. Powerful heatwaves completely blanketed the entirety of the ocean. When they reflexively raised their heads, they were treated to a truly unbelievable spectacle.

Kim Dok-Ja was right.

「The burning, seething sun was falling towards the middle of the ocean.」

Han Su-Yeong in charge of the control tower shouted out from the top of Gong Pil-Du's fortress. "Get ready for battle!!"

This heat was so intense that it felt like even their souls were melting. And within the solar flames, the bewinged 999th turn's Uriel floated silently.

[[Where is the 'Secretive Plotter'?]]

「The Outer God King, the 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

Han Su-Yeong swallowed back her saliva after sensing the enormous Status wafting in front of her. More correctly, she tried to. However, she couldn't sense any moisture within her mouth as if all of her salivae had evaporated. She forced her parched throat to speak up.

"And now, we commence with the 'flame extinguishment'."

The flame extinguishment – that was the mission the first team was tasked with. Han Su-Yeong recalled the last words Kim Dok-Ja said to her before he disembarked.

- Don't kill her. She's also 'Uriel'.

…That damn Kim Dok-Ja. He wanted them to subdue such a thing without killing it??

The silence continued and the 'Living Flame' narrowed her eyes. [[If you aren't going to answer…]]

"Yu Sang-Ah!"

The signal was given and Yu Sang-Ah extended her arms out. As her Buddhist robe wavered gently, a gigantic Mandala spun around behind her and it shot towards the sun. The strongest debuff skill currently possessed was activated.

[Fable, 'Hour of Mandala', is activating!]

It was really negligible, but the movement of the sun had become just a little slower.

The 999th turn's Uriel muttered out. [[… Interfering with time and space? Is Sakyamuni in this place? I haven't sensed his aura, though?]]

Ku-dudududu!

She clenched her fist and the space-time of the surrounding world

shook powerfully as if it'd shatter at any moment.

Blood leaked out of Yu Sang-Ah's lips. "This is the best I can do!"

"Jeong Hui-Won! Shin Yu-Seung!"

Two of them dashed forward after hearing Han Su-Yeong's order.

The first one the 999th turn's Uriel discovered was Shin Yu-Seung. The shadow of a huge Dragon was cast on the ocean's surface. And then, the Poison Breath blanketed the sun's destructive conflagration.

[[So, you're this world-line's 'Beast Lord'?]]

A portion of Uriel's Incarnation Body touched by the Breath changed colour, but that lasted only for a short while. Her skin reverted back to normal in the blink of an eye.

"Why don't you try to block this, too!"

That voice came from right beside her, and the 999th turn's Uriel reflexively swung her sword.

Claaaaaaaang!!

[Flames of Retribution] and [Judge's Sword] collided.

Just one collision and Jeong Hui-Won had to retreat while vomiting out blood.

[Incarnation 'Jeong Hui-Won' is currently activating 'Hour of Judgement'!]

[[The Hour of Judgement? How are you using that technique against me?]]

"Who knows?"

The [Hellfire] covered Jeong Hui-Won's sword, and the wings of Archangel spread out from behind her back. The 999th turn's Uriel confirmed them and her expression hardened as she unleashed her Status.

[[… So, you are my Incarnation.]]

As if to oppose that statement, the power of the Constellation emanated from Jeong Hui-Won's body as well.

[Hui-Won-ee is my Incarnation, not yours!]

Two Uriels unleashed their Statuses at each other and began colliding.

The first exchange, then the second; as the collision increased in frequency, Jeong Hui-Won's expression quickly grew more and more agitated.

"What kind of power is…!"

[[I won't get fooled by those ridiculous memories again like the last time.]]

Jeong Hui-Won was forced to go on the defensive in an instant, leading Uriel to urgently shout out. [■ck! Are you just going to watch and do nothing?!]

Almost at the same time, jet-black flames sneak-attacked the 999th turn's Uriel on her back. The 'Living Flame' frowned heavily and spoke up. [[The Black Flame Dragon.]]

The Black Flame Dragon shouted out triumphantly, the bandages unwrapped from both of his arms now. [Kekeke. How did that feel, you stinking Angel!]

The Absolute Good and the Absolute Evil. Two Fable-grade Constellations who used to be sworn enemies once upon a time were

fighting together in order to stop this calamity.

The [Hellfire] and [Black Flame] bore down on the army of the sun. And as she was bathed in the storm of blinding light rays, Han Su-Yeong quietly shuddered.

'…So strong.'

With just one hand, the 'Living Flame' was fighting against those two powerful Constellations. This opponent couldn't be pushed back even when the two of them combined their strengths.

[[Me of this turn only amounts to this much? Where is ? Why are you fighting alongside these people?]]

[■ck, Eden has been destroyed already!!]

[[… is no more? And you wish to confront me without the blessing of the Nebula?]]

The Living Flame then turned her head away as if to indicate that she had no more reason to fight these two. The sun's rays seemed to grow even stronger, then some things began crawling out from the intense heat. They were 'Outer Gods' that followed her. An army numbering several thousand was waiting for her command.

[[Go. Find the 'Secretive Plotter'.]]

Their march began. Countless 'Nameless Ones' possessing burning wings began descending to the world below. At this rate, the whole of the Korean Peninsula might get swept aside in an instant.

[Incarnation 'Shin Yu-Seung' is activating 'Superlative Diverse Communication Lv.???'!]

Shin Yu-Seung made her move.

Countless aquatic creatures burst out of the ocean's surface and leapt up to bite the ankles of the 'Nameless Ones' before dragging them down.

Then, the Master of the Armed Fortress, Gong Pil-Du joined her as well. Automated turrets installed atop the defensive walls began spitting out licks of flames, and the Nameless Ones turning into Swiss cheese all screamed in pain.

The 999th turn's Uriel spoke up. [[You even accepted such an evil man as your comrade? How pathetic.]]

The 'Nameless Ones' continued to march towards unfazed towards Gong Pil-Du's fortress. And just as one of the outer walls was about to be destroyed by the constant attacks of the Outer Gods, Han Su-Yeong cried out.

"Yi Gil-Yeong!"

As if he was waiting for that, Yi Gil-Yeong immediately appeared above the wall. Jet-black Status was tightly wrapped around the boy as he roared out to the sky. When he did, yellowish clouds rushed in from somewhere and covered up the heavens above.

It was only for a moment, but this new army was vast enough to hide that white-hot star.

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is baring its white fangs.]

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[[… Demon God Abaddon? Why is a bastard like you here??]]

Surprised by an unexpected enemy's entrance, the 999th turn's Uriel growled menacingly.

With Shin Yu-Seung and Gong Pil-Du, and now also Yi Gil-Yeong added to the mix, the battle had finally become evenly-matched. Abaddon's yellow locust swarm threw themselves at the 'Nameless

Ones' and blocked them.

[Gah-aaaaaah!!]

The Nameless Ones writhed in pain. The 999th Uriel furrowed her brows. While easily defending against the Archangel Uriel and the Black Flame Dragon's combined assault with only one hand, she began concentrating magical energy on the other. She was planning to break through the encirclement with her own [Hellfire].

However, there was someone here capable of reading her thoughts first.

"Now! Attack!"

Han Su-Yeong's signal prompted a lengthy scythe to leap out from the surface of the deep ocean.

Accompanied by the slicing noise, a huge wound was inflicted on the former Archangel's wing. White feathers scattered alongside the Fable of the other world.

[[King of the …!]]

For the first time ever, the expression of the 999th turn's Uriel had completely stiffened.

[Nebula, , is releasing the stored-up Fable!]

Hades and the portion of 's elite forces crossed over using a portal.

Which included the three Judges as well as Persephone.

The 'Nameless Ones' guarding the sun were brought down, and the 's Status began pressuring the 999th turn's Uriel. However, she steadfastly withstood it.

The Incarnations of Sakyamuni and the Archangel Uriel, as well as the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon. And on top of that, the Myth-grade Constellation Hades, too. Even

though one of her wings was torn from a sneak attack, and she was currently subjected under the combat force of a fairly-strong Nebula as well, she was not being pushed back at all.

No, it seemed that she was actually searching for an opportunity to overturn this situation, instead.

"What are you waiting for?! Hurry up and join them!"

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', lazily makes his move as if he finds this whole affair bothersome.]

Ku-gugugugu!

Gloomy clouds rolled in just above the yellow-coloured clouds. Lightning emitting an ominous bluish glow suddenly crashed down to the ocean below without holding back.

The heavens breathlessly flickered; a figure of an aloof Constellation was revealed in between the lightning flares brushing by – a Myth-grade Constellation blessed with dancing platinum hair and a rather uniquely-arrogant grin stood there.

The moment the 999th turn's Uriel opened her eyes wide, the Ruyi Jingu Bang filling up her view powerfully smashed her entire body down.

She failed to withstand the impact force and her Incarnation Body slammed into the ocean with a deafening explosion noise.

Fin.

"Nice work, Sun Wukong!!"

The clearly-excited Han Su-Yeong cried out.

Along with the 'ku-ru-ruk' noise, bloody foams rose up above the ocean. Not too long after, 999th turn's Uriel revealed herself on the water's surface. She must've ripped apart the surrounding aquatic creatures before rising up, because her entire figure was bathed in a crimson hue.

Rather than betrayal, it was the sense of wonderment filling up her expression.

[[… I can't believe it. Great Sage, even you're taking their side?]]

Eventually, that wonderment changed into a longing.

The Great Sage detected that change and asked her. [Who might you be, acting as if you know me?]

[[I'm simply recalling a comrade-in-arms I lost in the past. I don't have any desire to fight against you. Get out of the way. All I want is the 'Secretive Plotter'.]]

For sure, no will to battle could be felt from her voice.

However, the Great Sage still shook his head. [I also dislike that dour bastard, but…]

As he smiled indifferently, incredible aura exploded forth from his entire figure.

[Our maknae will be troubled if that guy dies, you see.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is revealing his Status!]

He was the existence who finally liberated his Status previously restricted by the headband, and he even acquired the powers of an Outer God after a partial 'Outer God

Transformation' had taken place.

Yogoes that fought together with him during the 「Journey to the West Remake」

were exiting from the portal to descend on the Pacific Ocean.

[Monkeykingmonkeykingmonkeyking]

'Outer Gods' worshipping different kings got into scuffles with one another. The ocean soaked in blood tumbled over violently, and the 999th turn's Uriel began gasping out.

And finally, the taut equilibrium began tilting to one side.

"It's working! Keep pushing!"

Along with Han Su-Yeong's voice, 's great Fables began telling their stories at the same time.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

Although the main shareholders Kim Dok-Ja and Yu Jung-Hyeok were missing, other members still possessed not-too-shabby percentages of the Great Fables' shares. And also, there were some others who had finished getting ready and were itching to unleash the final strike.

[Only one sun in the sky is enough.]

First, it was Surya appearing along with his train. And then…

[Cutting down Outer Gods have become quite a habit now.]

[Let us combine our strengths, Breaking the Sky Saint.]

"I'm also coming!"

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The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios, plus Jang Ha-Yeong, all joined in.

And so, the 999th turn's Uriel was pushed on her back foot. Her expression was gradually being dyed in confusion.

[[How… How can all of you be together? What kind of a world-line is this…??]]

She was panicking at the Great Fables rushing in; their sizes were quite large, but their contents proved to be even more problematic. Just how was it possible that such a Fable existed?

Just how…?

Three Transcenders riding on the train penetrated past the sun's heat barrier. Then, an attack containing the outrageous amount of power that combined [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship], [Lightning Transformation], and even [Breaking the Sky Force Punch] shot out.

Just as that strike was about to sneak in through Uriel's opening and land on her…

A chilling sensation suddenly enveloped the nape of Han Su-Yeong's neck.

"No, stop!"

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is urgently revising the story!]

The powerful sensation only she could feel in this whole world arrested her. And right next second, the noise akin to the time/space of the surrounding dimension being squeezed dry rang out loudly.

Ka-dududududuk.

Han Su-Yeong couldn't tell what was going on before her eyes.

[[What's this? Where is 'me' in this regression turn? Could I have been killed already?]]

That rebellious voice sounded as if a portion of the abyss had been taken away to mould it into reality.

The Transcenders approaching the rear of the Outer God to land the final strike were

falling to earth along with the destroyed train. Indescribably dark [Black Flames] were burning on the ends of their clothing.

A lone man was standing amidst the gloomy, dark clouds in the sky. He was someone Han Su-Yeong also knew. She knew him so well that goosebumps were breaking out on her skin.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is warning you of danger!]

The man slowly opened his mouth. [[Chet. I thought it was Ji-Hye, what with this much rampaging Status and all. Made a mistake since it's been so long and all.]]

The sun of the 'Living Flame' emitted blinding rays of light. However, the darkness belonging to the man grew even thicker in response, just like the shadow lengthening against the light.

The 999th turn's Uriel spoke. [['The Monarch of the Great Abyss'. Just who summoned a bastard like you to this world-line?]]

The nape of Han Su-Yeong's neck grew icy; she remembered what Kim Dok-Ja told her about the ruler of the northern universe, the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss'.

[[Hahaht. You finally called me with that title. Besides all that, you look like you're in a bit of trouble? Should I help you out?]]

The sun's corona flared up as if it was convulsing.

[[I don't need it. Help from a scoundrel like you is…]]

[[Don't be like that. We're 'comrades' from the same regression turn, after all.]]

The man cackled insidiously.

He was none other than the Demon of Delusions Kim Nam-Woon who also witnessed the 999th turn's 'Conclusion'.

And the moment his gaze moved, Han Su-Yeong felt a chill run down her entire body.

[[I also wanna see the Black Dragon's face, since it's been a while.]]

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Kim Nam-Woon was already right by her face and he began studying her with a nefarious gaze.

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When his eyes slowly opened up, Yu Jung-Hyeok realised that he was wandering within the darkness alone.

The last thing he could remember was him researching the sure-kill attack with Kim Dok-Ja. Something went wrong in the middle of that, and he lost his consciousness…

[Your soul form is currently in an unstable condition!]

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is currently in an illegible state.]

「When is that idiot Yu Jung-Hyeok's birthday, again?」

Fragmented memories occasionally drifted in. He heard a voice in between his blurry consciousness. No, rather than a voice, it was far closer to letters, instead.

Yu Jung-Hyeok quickly recognised whose speech pattern it belonged to.

「… The regression turn mentioned for the first time is… 」

That silly manner of speech capable of irritating a person to no end – only Kim Dok-Ja spoke like that in the entire world.

「Ee-ya~, this part was really entertaining, wasn't it? 」

Sentences on the pages Kim Dok-Ja was reading brushed past his eyes. Yu Jung-Hyeok saw himself fighting against Constellations right there.

「The 1st regression turn, 41st, 666th… 」

Kim Dok-Ja's fingers tracing the letters suddenly stopped. The information on a certain regression turn could be spied in between his fingers lingering on for the longest time.

「The 999th turn. 」

Even Yu Jung-Hyeok was aware of the events that happened during that regression turn. The 「Hellscape of Eternity 」 was informing him of the time he couldn't remember through all the texts Kim Dok-Ja had read.

The latter seemed to be muttering softly while reading about that regression turn.

「"I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok…" 」

The real Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't know anything about the life supported by that lame declaration.

'Yu Jung-Hyeok' as read by Kim Dok-Ja; his history remained like soot in between the flow of the pages. Ostracised within school, tormented in his part-time workplace by a boss busy stealing his wages, and going on a forced march until soles of his feet became a bloodied mess during his army days – Kim Dok-Ja endured them all by calling himself Yu Jung-Hyeok.

The latter simply couldn't understand the former.

He had no idea what it meant for the time he had to endure ending up saving someone else living in a completely different world. He just didn't know what it meant for a person to become more courageous by reading about someone else's battles.

Not only that, Yu Jung-Hyeok even found his own self as seen through those texts utterly unfamiliar.

「"I can still fight."」

Did he really say that?

「"Doesn't matter whether it's a hundred times or thousand, I shall continue to be reborn to kill you all."」

Was he really the kind of a person to say something like this?

The voices of the companions that trusted him could be found among the countless texts.

「Captain.」

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「I only trust you.」

「You must save the world in the next turn.」

The world-lines kept vanishing, the only things left behind being those sentences. And as the volume of the words that tormented him

increased, the value of life itself became cheaper.

Just what did they see in him to fight alongside him?

'Who am I?'

Yu Jung-Hyeok was overcome with emptiness as he stared at the words outside his ability to comprehend.

1864 lifetimes.

He already knew what sort of a world he had to cross to get here.

However, he couldn't understand it at all.

「Is this really everything of me, these memories?」

Yu Jung-Hyeok grew curious. If he was really nothing more than a 'character' just as Kim Dok-Ja said, then what happened to the 'time' he couldn't remember?

Where was himself not among the pages that Kim Dok-Ja had read?

Or, did he not exist from the get-go?

[Your Sponsor is looking closely at you.]

Could he really be able to say from where his life had 'existed' and where it ended?

Tsu-chuchuchut…

He reflexively looked back at the emptiness as soon as he felt the chilling sensation.

He found someone else other than him there.

[[Are you doing an introspection of yourself? You don't have the time to waste like

this.]]

Yu Jung-Hyeok immediately recognised who it was.

'You shouldn't be able to move still.'

He glared at the 'Secretive Plotter'. He instinctively reached out towards his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], but the familiar hilt was nowhere to be found.

This place was his imagined world. Items didn't exist here.

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared back at him and shook his head in disappointment. [[At this rate, all of your comrades will be annihilated.]]

'Annihilated?'

Cold sensation crept down his back.

His companions were about to enter a dangerous battle against the 'Outer God King'.

He could definitely sense the ominous aura flowing around in the surroundings.

He needed to wake up at once. He needed to get out of here, and…

[[There's no point in going with your current state. If you can't utilise the power of the 1863rd turn, then you won't prove to be any help whatsoever.]]

'So what? What are you saying?'

Yu Jung-Hyeok growled menacingly, yet the Secretive Plotter remained unruffled.

[[You have another way of utilising the power of the 1863rd turn.]]

Right away, he deciphered the meaning behind those words.

The only reason why he could regain the power of the 1863rd turn for a short moment was due to Kim Dok-Ja's Fable, 「Hellscape of Eternity」. And the one who gave that fool his Fable was…

Yu Jung-Hyeok gritted his teeth and asked.

'You expect me to trust you? And why are you trying to help us?'

[[I was asked for a favour.]]

‘…A favour?'

[[I'll lend you my powers just this once. I hope that you learn something from this.]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' reached out from the darkness. There was no time to dodge, and the cold palm of a boy touched Yu Jung-Hyeok's forehead. And then…

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

Accompanied by pain severe enough to blank out the inside of his head, a humongous Fable flooded in. These were memories he already knew. However, they were also the ones he failed to understand. Every Fable of 'Secretive Plotter' coursed within his bloodstreams while emitting white-hot heat.

The 1st turn, 2nd, 3rd, 4th… and then, 1863rd.

Countless Yu Jung-Hyeoks were waking up within him.

All of them were Yu Jung-Hyeok. Each of them was Yu Jung-Hyeok. But at the same time, Yu Jung-Hyeok was just one person.

The one person, who managed to live through 1864 lifetimes.

He began remembering things one by one.

Such as, who he was.

What he lived for.

Fables were circling around his vicinity. Within the Fable, someone was asking this.

「"By the way, when is Captain's birthday?"」

That prompted Kim Dok-Ja to reply.

「Ah, I found it. It was over here. Third of August.」

Right. He was born in the summer. A hellishly hot and humid summer, when horrible

storms were lashing out.

He could remember everything so vividly now.

His birthday that no one celebrated or congratulated him for. All those anniversaries that lost their meanings as he went through 1864 lifetimes.

Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly opened his eyes. The energy of Fable completely saturated his whole body. This feeling was something he had not felt before during this '3rd' turn.

He raised his head and sensed the hot rays of the sun.

Even so far away, he could still clearly sense it – the 'Outer God's' presence calling out to him from beyond the faraway horizon. However, he didn't feel scared.

He slowly raised his body up and confirmed the condition of his Incarnation Body.

Every single part of it was operating at a near-perfection.

Fables he had compiled so far were permeating within every fibre of his being.

「In that very moment, Yu Jung-Hyeok felt as if he was reborn.」

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has recovered its complete Status.]

This was the true power he originally possessed, the Status of a being who reached the final turn of the world and witnessed the 'Wall' by himself alone.

['Disconnected Film Theory' is currently activating in an abnormal manner.]

[Connection between films is incomplete.]

[The entire film may cease to exist if this connection is forcibly maintained.]

He could only rely on this power for a brief time. However, it was more than enough for him. Yu Jung-Hyeok raised his head and looked up at the sky.

The heavens were screaming out. The flashes of lightning strikes vividly illuminated the scars engraved on his face every so often.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

[Attribute, 'Terror of the Stars', is activating!]

His glare caused the stars to run away in fear.

Yu Jung-Hyeok stared at them for a moment, before his figure flashed towards the distant sun.

Fin.

Han Su-Yeong just couldn't believe what was happening before her eyes. The Transcenders fell in an instant, and Underworld's Judges were also defeated one after the other.

"Get back, Han Su-Yeong!"

As the loud 'Clang!!' resounded out, Jeong Hui-Won standing before her was flung away. The Fable mushroomed out from the man grinning mischievously as if he was playing around.

[Great Fable, 'Delusional Design', has begun its storytelling!]

The entire body of the Monarch of the Great Abyss, the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon, began emitting the [Black Flame]'s aura. That aura soon became a silhouette of a dragon with several heads. Its maws split wide open, and soon after, destructive air currents blanketed everything in the surroundings.

Kwa-aaaaaaaah!!

"Yu-Seung-ah! Gil-Yeong-ah!"

The exploding chain of the [Black Flame] swallowed the kids.

Yu Sang-Ah left the battlefield in order to rush out and save them, causing the time/space debuff restraining the 999th turn's Uriel to weaken.

Go-oooooh!

She was regaining her original strength after a short period of it shrinking back.

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon cackled after witnessing that sight.
[[Well, now.

What would've happened without my help, I wonder?]]

[[Shut your mouth. Once I find the 'Secretive Plotter', you're next.]]

She shot Kim Nam-Woon a terrifying glare and then swung her [Flames of Retribution]

towards the battlefield.

The one opposing her was the Great Sage. The Ruyi Jingu Bang dancing around stylishly blocked off her sword strikes. Kim Nam-Woon watched the Great Sage match up evenly to an 'Outer God King' and was thoroughly impressed by this sight.

What caught his attention even more, was the pitch-black aura oozing out from the Great Sage's entire figure.

[[The Status of Chaos? Did this guy also become an 'Outer God', too?]]

[[… More correctly, it seems that one of his entities have become one.]]

[[Hahaha, what the hell. What's up with this world-line?]]

[[I shall take care of him, so you bastard, go and take care of the small fries plus the King of the Underworld.]]

[[Chet, I also wanted to have a go at the Great Sage just like someone else, you know.]]

Perhaps enraged by the garbage he just heard, the Great Sage roared on and poured out his magical energy. The golden aura blanketed the entire sky and for a moment there, forced back the [Black Flame]'s attacks.

Unfortunately, he had to suffer quite severe aftermaths all over his body as his price.

[…Goddammit, Meihouwang! Get a grip, man!]

It seemed that the Great Sage's Fables, combined temporarily for this event, were colliding with each other. And now, he was being slowly pushed back from the barrage of the 999th turn's Uriel.

The Myth-grade Constellations acting as the final redoubt were being forced back, as well; the situation on Hades's side was even worse.

Kwa-gwagwagwagwa!!

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It was unknown whether holding him back or the internal issue within the itself was to blame, but for some reason, Hades's battle came across as rather stifling, unsatisfactory.

[[Hahaha! The 'King of the Underworld', one of the three Gods of Olympus, amount to only this much?]]

Hades frowned and continued to silently wield his scythe, but he was still pushed back, forcing Persephone behind telling the Great Fable to step forward as well.

[Did you know? Your soul is currently trapped in the Underworld in this world-line.]

[[What rubbish are you talking about? Why am I locked up in there?]]

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon grew irritated and suddenly poured out a huge amount of [Black Flame]. Hades was struck by the attack capable of melting the space itself and his gigantic frame crashed into the ocean.

Han Su-Yeong shuddered; that was definitely a type of the [Black Flame] she was familiar with. But just how long did anyone have to train in order to control it to such a degree?

[[This is so weird. You telling me that the Black Flame has chosen

someone like you as his Incarnation?]]

When she raised her head, the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon was already right in front of her eyes.

Han Su-Yeong flinched, but before she could shrink back, his hand approached her. The moment she realised it was too late to dodge, sparks danced in the air and his hand was deflected away.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is growling.]

[[… Oiii, what's this? I'm the real one, Black Flame Dragon-ah.]]

Kim Nam-Woon's eyes gently arced as if he was dealing with a cute puppy.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', declares that "you, bastard, aren't my Incarnation".]

[[Aha. So you got yourself a shiny new car in this place, is that it?]] A streak of chilling madness flashed by Kim Nam-Woon's eyes. [[In that case, I guess I should turn it into a scrap heap first.]]

Kaaaa-booooom!

An explosion going off right in front of her nose caused Han Su-Yeong's body to fly backwards. She tried to minimise the impact force by shrinking herself, but even then, she still vomited out a mouthful of blood. She had her Sponsor to thank for not getting killed in that attack.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is shouting at you to run away!]

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon personally incarnated into the skies and wrapped around her as if to protect her. A giant dragon seemingly sculptured out from a slab of obsidian angrily roared out into the

world, its eyes seemingly carved out from a pair of rubies burning brightly.

[[Hahahahat! This is it! Now this is more like my Black Flame Dragon!]]

The two existences commenced with their fierce battle, causing the ocean to buckle as if it was being relentlessly bombarded. Shattered fragments of islands flew about, and the Black Flame Dragon's Breath enveloped the entire sea.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is revealing his Status!]

Unfortunately, it was difficult to stop Kim Nam-Woon after he had become an Outer God, even if it was the Black Flame Dragon doing the fighting.

From the get-go, this opponent was an existence descending to the world as a calamity; the total amount of Probability he was allowed to use was on another scale.

Han Su-Yeong began thinking. What should they do in order to stop this utterly nonsensical creature?

「If it was Kim Dok-Ja, what could he have done?」

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

It was right then that faint sparks danced around her as a sharp pang of pain rang

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inside her head.

「How disappointing. Even in this situation, you're still relying on him?」

That was a voice she heard before in the past. In a dream she had,

when she was still progressing through the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

Inside that dream where a man wearing the white coat was killed by another wearing the black coat, Han Su-Yeong definitely heard that voice.

「It's because you're like this that that fool was so full of himself in my regression turn.」

The Fable was actually talking to her.

'You are… '

「I wasn't planning to interfere anymore, but… I'm going to help you one more time.」

The voice sounded as if it was being very generous to her. Along with the sensation of time slowing down greatly, her cognitive ability expanded as well. Countless Han Su-Yeongs woke up inside her head and opened their mouths at the same time.

「Everything that happens in the world has already happened. There's nothing to be surprised about.」

A visceral sensation seemingly hardwired to the future completely took hold of her brain. An ability that could create a world she didn't know previously by combining numerous cliches, patterns, and given information, went to work. The memories of the

'Ways of Survival' she read, the info she heard from Kim Dok-Ja, and the info she gleamed herself, were pieced together logically to write a new story.

Someone was laughing now.

「That's right. Now that is the true [Predictive Plagiarism].」

And Han Su-Yeong realised what she needed to do now.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

She couldn't tell if it'd work or not. However…

'…If it's Kim Dok-Ja, he'd have done it.'

「Again, again you…!」

The Black Flame Dragon's loud, rough roar covered up the entire sky. The battle had been going on only for a brief while, yet the creature's proud figure was riddled with wounds both large and small. Just as the dragon spread open its torn wings to pour out a Breath…

"That's enough, Flame Dragon-ah."

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…]

"Let me take care of this, so believe in me and take a step back."

The Black Flame Dragon's eyes were quickly dyed in confusion after seeing Han Su-Yeong step forward as if to protect her Sponsor. Rather than explaining herself to the dragon, she took yet another step forward.

[[Hoh-oh, so you want to fight me personally? With that chestnut-sized body of yours?]]

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon emitted an incredible amount of aura. The Great Fable 「Delusional Design」 wielded grinder-like sharp blades, already fully prepared to cut and slice Han Su-Yeong up at any given moment. However, she didn't seem to be fazed at all.

"Kim Nam-Woon. You haven't changed even after becoming an Outer God."

[[What's this? You sound like you know about me?]]

"Right, I know a lot about you. You, the idiot who failed to fulfil his unrequited love and even after becoming an Outer God, is still chasing after a girl."

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon's jaw slowly dropped.

「All Outer Gods have lost their memories. Or, what little remains are unstable.」

「In that case, how did 'Kings' retain their memories?」

「Could it be that those memories are far too precious to them?」

"The dude who couldn't even confess properly when good opportunities presented themselves, yet still puts on underwear with giant robots on them just in case."

[[… You, you! What the hell are you?! How do you know something that not even my captain knew…?!]]

"The reason why you always bandage your hand is probably to hide that self-inflicted wound on your wrist, right? You didn't want Yi Ji-Hye to discover that."

Kim Nam-Woon was momentarily overcome by fluster, but he managed to quickly fix his expression.

"Why do you like Yi Ji-Hye?"

[Fable, 'Forty-Thousand-Year-Old Crush', is getting agitated.]

[[… T-that is, because Ji-Hye is pretty…]]

"Nope. You might be trash, but you don't have the setting of lusting after women."

[[Setting? What the hell are you talking about…]]

"The reason why you like Yi Ji-Hye so much is because she trusts and follows Yu Jung-Hyeok."

[[What dogshit is…]]

"You wanted to be acknowledged by her. That you're good enough to replace Yu Jung-Hyeok."

[Great Fable, 'Delusional Design', is getting greatly agitated!]

"Actually, you just wished to become like Yu Jung-Hyeok."

Han Su-Yeong stared deeply into the eyes of the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon that were getting colder and harder.

[[What an entertaining… story. However, I don't have much time left, you see? I ain't gonna listen to your bull…]]

Han Su-Yeong didn't know whether saying these things were a right move or not. No, in truth, she knew it wasn't one. Even then, she simply had to say them. In order to save this world, she must…

"And by doing that, you… want to be forgiven by Yi Ji-Hye."

…Must ruthlessly dig into the old wounds from another world.

"If it weren't for your mistake, the 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok wouldn't have died, after all."

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Almost instantly, sparks exploded forth from the entire figure of the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon. Sounds of something creaking could be heard next. The foundational Fables that formed his core were cracking apart. Those were noises of his memories breaking down.

[[You…]]

The enraged Kim Nam-Woon hurriedly gathered up his Fables now swimming in confusion and roared out. The light in his eyes faded in and out repeatedly.

Han Su-Yeong quietly observed him in the meantime.

「Even [Predictive Plagiarism] can't know everything.」

Her overheating head felt hot as if it was burning in flames.

She hadn't read the entirety of the 'Ways of Survival' like Kim Dok-Ja had done, nor did she live through the 999th turn for real like Yu Jung-Hyeok.

However, there were certain things she could still tell without having to hear or see them. That was the power of imagination – the power to infer the context even though she didn't know the finer details of a particular story.

As long as there was a situation, its development pre-arranged, and with the 'Probability'

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existing in this world…

Her 'Predictive Plagiarism' could exercise a near-omniscient level of power.

"Kim Nam-Woon."

Han Su-Yeong walked in the sky one step at a time. He staggered about, hugging his Fables while growling like a wounded beast.

「Han Su-Yeong stared at such Kim Nam-Woon's Fable.」

It was the same for Yu Jung-Hyeok as well as the Constellations.

All creatures that lived for a long time were the same; just as their strengths were reflected in their history, so did their weaknesses, also reflected in their past. That was the fate of the ones telling such stories, the ones being told in those stories.

Like an author using a pen to scribble out unnecessary parts, Han Su-Yeong reached out towards Kim Nam-Woon.

「Just like when Kim Dok-Ja made the 1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok give in.」

"You probably want to go back to those times. However, you must've despaired at the fact that you can never go back."

[[Y-you, if you keep running your mouth…!]]

"However, you need to know this. The world-line you lived in is over, and the people you loved aren't going to come back. And the likes of you can never become Yu Jung-Hyeok. You can never save anyone nor can you atone for your sins."

Kim Nam-Woon's cheeks were trembling. The foundation of a being who witnessed the 'Conclusion' of the 999th regression turn and became an 'Outer God King', was unsteadily shaking about. He made an expression of a man whose every Fable had been lost. In that moment, his face was of a seventeen-year-old boy thrown into the world for the first time. His Fable that existed for tens of thousands of years, his unshakeable delusions he had built up all this time, were crumbling apart with just a few well-placed words.

[[N-no, that's not true. I, I am…]]

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Han Su-Yeong spoke as if she was putting the full stop on that small crack. "You are simply an eternal prisoner trapped in this stinking , that's all."

Pah-chuchuchut!

[[Kim Nam-Woon!!]]

The 999th turn's Uriel roared out in her true voice, and Kim Nam-Woon's fading consciousness woke back up.

[Fable, 'Comrade of Desperate Spirit', has begun its storytelling!]

The only thing capable of rebuilding a broken Fable was another Fable. Kim Nam-Woon's Fable that she worked so hard to disrupt was regaining its original shape. Light was returning to his eyes, too. Han

Su-Yeong could only smile wryly.

'Goddammit, I thought it was going well. Still, did I hurt him at least a little bit?'

Soon, great rage filled up Kim Nam-Woon's eyes.

[[… Hahat, I almost got done in there. I see, so there was a reason why the Black Flame Dragon had chosen you.]]

A powerful premonition of death washed over her. The [Predictive Plagiarism] tautly spinning around suddenly sagged like a snapped tape. The tragic premonition of death being unavoidable no matter where she ran off to.

It was then, she heard that voice again alongside the 'Tsu-chut!'

「This should be enough. Because, the protagonist is here.」

Her senses seemingly connected to the future rapidly grew murky. Kim Nam-Woon's fist raised up high towards the sky froze still. Everyone within the battlefield could sense it. Something incredible was approaching them.

Ku-gugugugu!

A 'Status' that simply by its existence alone could lead a world to its annihilation.

The first one to react was the 999th turn's Uriel. [[It's him!!]]

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She roared out a horrifying howl towards the skies and quickly left the battle, before flinging herself towards the direction of that Status.

Kim Nam-Woon too stared in that direction. [[You… You got really lucky this time. Next time we meet, I will…]]

He alternated his gaze between Han Su-Yeong and the Black Flame Dragon and hesitated, before disappearing in the direction of where Uriel had gone off to. Having lost all sense of tension, she plopped down on her butt on top of the Dragon's body.

She stared beyond the horizon where those two had disappeared and recalled the last thing Kim Dok-Ja said to her.

- Han Su-Yeong, if in the one-in-a-million chance that something goes wrong…

- Will you stop planting those ominous foreshadows already??

She thought that such things wouldn't happen.

- No matter what, you gotta endure until that guy shows up.

"That bastard. Making such a cool entrance and stuff."

She could hear thunderclaps going off in the distant night sky, stained by the auras of the [Hellfire] and [Black Flame].

A man with an ancient face was descending on the heavens of end times.

Fin.

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The coat dancing against the strong winds, that indescribable Status leaking out nonstop from the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

Han Su-Yeong definitely knew that guy. But even then, why was this? At least in this very moment, he seemed like a completely different

existence to her.

“…Are you really Yu Jung-Hyeok?"

He glanced in her direction, before spinning around towards the Pacific Ocean with a loud boom. She panicked and cried out.

"Hey, you! Where are you going?!"

[[After him!!]]

The 999th turn's Uriel and Kim Nam-Woon chased after him next.

Han Su-Yeong only then realised what his intentions were. Yu Jung-Hyeok was trying to lure these Outer Gods away from the companions.

"That crazy idiot…”

"Su-Yeong-ssi, are you alright?"

Yu Sang-Ah came closer and supported her. The moment she leaned against her shoulders, Han Su-Yeong ended up vomiting all the blood flowing backwards inside her.

"Bleeergh-!"

Her head felt hot as if every blood vessel in it was burning up. Sparks went wild as if to scorch her frontal lobe. She endured the pain and shouted out. "Great Sage! Hades!

Uriel! You must hurry and chase after Yu Jung-Hyeok! The rest of us will take care of

this place, so please hurry! You mustn't let that guy fight alone!"

[has noticed your Fable.]

[You have used a power that went against the Probability!]

"Keok…"

Her vision dizzily spun around; her internals hurt as if they had completely overturned.

[Your Incarnation Body is being swept up in the storm of aftermaths!]

Han Su-Yeong detected a powerful force about to explode within her body and hurriedly shouted out. "Yu Sang-Ah! Get away!"

However, Yu Sang-Ah held Han Su-Yeong's shoulders even tighter and shook her head.

The power of Sakyamuni she had inherited was being transmitted through the hand touching the latter's shoulder. The time and space twisted, slowing down the growth of the aftermaths' storm. "Fight it. You can do it. I also fought it off and survived in the past, too."

"Goddammit."

Muscles all over her body were moaning out. Faint terror seeped inside her amongst all the horrifying pain. She had been habitually muttering out about being careful around the Probability, yet here she was, making a critical mistake like this. She mistakenly thought that, since a fool like Kim Dok-Ja managed to survive until now, she'd somehow make it through this one, too.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

…Was she going to die? So meaninglessly like this?

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

It was around here that the signs of the aftermath's storm gradually softened.

Han Su-Yeong witnessed letters covering up her Incarnation Body. Those were words she wrote in the past – words she secretly wrote in the note pad so that neither Kim Dok-Ja nor Yu Jung-Hyeok could find out later. And now, those words were leaking out

from the flapping pages of the note pad to wrap around her body.

However, there were some sentences she hadn't written before mixed in among them.

「You're indeed me, so your writing skill isn't too shabby, I guess.」

The voice sounded half-mocking and half-satisfied.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is bearing the aftermath's storm in your stead.]

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…

As the storm of Probability's aftermaths weakened, the letters began scattering away gradually faster and faster.

Han Su-Yeong wanted to ask. About these sentences, about what they actually were.

Unfortunately, she didn't have enough energy left to even ask a question anymore.

「… This is probably as far as I can go. Send the word out to Kim Dok-Ja.」

[The vestige of another world-line permeating within your Fable has begun dissipating.]

As her consciousness faded out, her Fable continued to speak to her.

「What waits for him in the 'Conclusion' he wishes for is… 」

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While supporting Yi Ji-Hye, I stared at the two 'Outer God Kings'.

They had lived in the same regression turn, and they also saw the same end of the world, yet they became two different beings.

[Great Fable, 'Wanderer of the Eternal Horizon', has begun its

storytelling.]

[Great Fable, 'Heart Sealing the Sorrow', has begun its storytelling!]

I could see the cross-section of the Fable laid bare within the sparks dancing in the air.

The story they compiled together line by every line with their blood – this was the story from the regression turn that I loved the most. The one that I had read many

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times over.

「"Captain Yu Jung-Hyeok. It's a relief that you are a regressor."」

The 'King of Silverlight Heart' glanced in my direction.

The 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong – the sorrow contained within his Fable was being transmitted to me through my [Reading Comprehension].

「"It'll be okay for me to stop being sad, yes? You're going to die, anyway. Even if you die, we'll be able to meet again in the next turn. And you'll continue your story in that place… And, you'll get to restart this journey once more, won't you?"」

The Fable of Steel was crying.

「"I'm sorry, Yi Hyeon-Seong."」

The forged steel expanded with loud noises and swallowed up his words. Tears that should've flowed out remained frozen within his eyes, dyed in the silvery light.

「"There's no need to apologise. We'll be seeing the Conclusion before you, after all.

The end you wanted to see, the promises you couldn't keep, all of them, I'll carry them all without missing a single one." 」

The 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong was looking at me. He was not the 'Yi Hyeon-Seong'

I knew, but even then, he was definitely 'Yi Hyeon-Seong'.

- You resemble that person greatly. Even more so than what I heard from my Sponsor.

The voice of the 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong entered my head. He even smiled gently, as if he knew what I was thinking about already.

How could this be? How could a man who had to endure such tragedies, be able to form that kind of expression?

- And that's why I won't let you die.

I knew that he didn't hold any hostilities towards us. But I didn't think he'd go this far to side with us, either. Just what kind of a Fable did the 'Master of Steel' hand over to

him as he died?

[[Hyeon-Seong ahjussi.]]

The one to cut the flow was the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye.

[[It's been a long time since you called me that.]]

[[I have no plans of hurting you. Get out of the way.]]

Two neverending Fables intertwined with each other.

Yi Hyeon-Seong spoke, sounding as if he was reminiscing about an ancient memory.

[[I'm sorry, but I can't do that.]]

[[Why are you stopping me? Ahjussi, you refused to be summoned as the 'calamity', didn't you? It was us who negotiated with the Bureau of this world-line, not you.]]

…So, I guess it really was the Bureau who summoned the 999th turn's beings as calamities.

Yi Hyeon-Seong maintained his silence for a bit before replying coldly. [[Never negotiate with the . That was our promise.]]

[[So? What happened to us as the result of that promise?]]

[[…]]

[[We destroyed the Bureau, we fought the Dokkaebi King. Then, after we clashed against the 'Final Wall'…I'm asking you, what happened to us after that?]]

The Final Wall – it seemed that they had witnessed that wall, as well. The 'Wall' that the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' of the original had eventually reached, too.

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye shuddered before continuing on. [[Just like you said, our story has ended. The world-line we used to live in was destroyed, and it's just us four that became 'Outer Gods' after surviving that destruction.]]

[[We promised to overcome the 'Final Wall' even if we become the existences outside the scenarios.]]

[[That wall isn't something we can overcome. You also know this.]]

[[In this world-line…]]

[[Stop it with 'this world-line' nonsense! What's so special about this

world-line, anyway? This place is exactly the same as the one we used to live in. It's a world-line that's going to end soon.]]

Yi Ji-Hye of this world-line staggered as I supported her. Her lips were trembling ever so slightly.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island' continued on. [[The Great Dokkaebis that got in contact with us said this, that they were going to abandon this world-line. That they are planning to recycle it and use it as the start of a new story.]]

Those words caused the 'King of Silverlight Heart' to change his expression. The previously-warm aura dissipated and the sensation of cold metal spread out.

A chilling voice came out from the forged steel's lips. [[… What kind of a deal did you make with the Bureau?]]

[[If this world is about to sink underneath the ocean, it's fine for us to destroy it personally, right?]]

[[Ji-Hye-ya.]]

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was smiling, but I wasn't sure whether I could truly describe that expression of 'smiling' or not.

[[The 'Dokkaebi King' of this world promised us that if we destroyed this world-line, then he'd revive our own world-line. He'd get in touch with the 'Most Ancient Dream'

and allow us to start our stories again.]]

Yi Ji-Hye's shoulders were trembling. I too was also sharing in that shuddering.

That was the reason for the 999th turn's beings to cross into this world. Even at the cost of destroying another world, they wished to regain theirs.

The 'King of Silverlight Heart' replied. [[Our goal wasn't to regain our world, but to find the true culprit of all these tragedies.]]

[[What will change even if we did?]]

[[If we wish to carry out our captain's wishes, we…]]

[[Even if we eliminate the source of the tragedies, the time we lost won't come back.

Our dead comrades won't come back to us. The world we lived in, it's not going to come back… The 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok who died there, he's never coming back.]]

Ku-gugugugu.

Something was approaching this location from afar while tearing through the horizon.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island' spoke again. [[That's why we don't have a choice but to end it all and start again.]]

The tsunami waves that lost its vigour began rising up once more.

The 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong hurriedly started the [Steel Transformation] and protected us with his metal. However, the force behind the waves was stronger and faster than the metal's growth speed.

[[You can't stop me. I told you this before that I'm not the only one here.]]

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

The crimson sunset cast from behind us was burning up the heavens. That was the power of the 'Living Flame', the 999th turn's Uriel.

And the meaning of her approaching here meant…

"Ahjussi, it can't be…?!"

Yi Ji-Hye grasped my sleeve.

I looked into her eyes and reassured her. "Don't worry. Things you're worried about will not happen."

I was also saying to that myself.

"Our story, it's not as weak as you fear."

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is revealing his Status.]

[Constellation, 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', is revealing his Status.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Constrictive Headband', is revealing his Status.]

The 'Demon King of Salvation', the 'Watcher of the Light and Darkness', plus the third Modifier I earned by putting on the constrictive headband – all of my Fables were emitting light at the same time.

I walked over to Yi Hyeon-Seong standing before us. "Thank you for helping us out.

However, it's alright not to push yourself."

[[It's dangerous. You must hide behind m…]]

"This isn't the 999th turn."

In front, the 'Master of the Sunken Island'. And at the back, the 'Living Flame'. There was no place to run now.

The shadow cast by the massive battleship dawned upon us. And while standing on the top of that huge wave, the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye muttered out as if she was mocking someone.

[[Everything will go back. Just like what the captain told us, we'll also regress. We'll go back to the past, and start everything from scratch. When we do…]]

The waves rolled in and crashed into us. I used the power of the 'Great Fable' to deal with that Status. I felt searing pain from both of my hands defending against the wave.

I saw the horizon where the sun and the ocean met just beyond the rumbling walls of the foams. The boundary that we could never reach no matter how far we run.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

And then, that boundary split apart right before my eyes. A single blade was actually cutting that boundary down.

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As she fell hard from the wave's highest-spot, the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was looking at us.

More correctly, at a man standing next to me.

"You can't change anything with regression. I needed a very long time to realise this."

Fin.

I sensed the power of a vast Fable oozing out from Yu Jung-Hyeok's entire frame.

[can't take its eyes away from the Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'!]

The will of the entire world was now paying attention to him.

[Absolute majority of Constellations watching the scenario have raised their wariness due to the existence of Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

[Constellations of the 'Final Scenario' are stunned by the Fable of Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

[Portion of the Bureau's Great Dokkaebis are demanding a 「Probability Suitability Evaluation」!]

[The 'King of Stories' has rejected the demand.]

[The 「Probability Suitability Evaluation」 is restricted within the applicable scenario.]

Every single Yu Jung-Hyeok's Fable that I knew felt 'complete' now. This feeling couldn't simply be described as him merely becoming

stronger. This 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'

before my eyes was a different existence to the one I became familiar with.

I got a little tense as I asked him. "Our companions?"

"Safe."

"You being here means the 'Secretive Plotter' has decided to do me that favour, right?"

My final alternative plan in case even the plan B failed was to awake the sleeping Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' currently has abnormally activated the 'Disconnected

Film Theory'.]

Tsu-chut…

[Film's connection is incomplete!]

[The entire film may cease to exist if this connection is forcibly maintained.]

The last-ditch method that I didn't want to resort to if at all possible, yet simply had to when left with no other options – the greatest ace up our sleeve we currently possessed.

['Yu Jung-Hyeoks' of all the regression turns are now looking at you.]

And I felt distant, numerous gazes coming from within him. Suddenly, I had this ominous foreboding. What if this Yu Jung-Hyeok wasn't the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' that I knew of…?

"Excuse me, but which regression turn Yu Jung-Hyeok are you?"

He then stared at me. I could see the thick scar on his cheek, a wound the 3rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't possess. I was about to ask something else, but then, several sentences flowed out from his body as if to shut my mouth.

「Terror of All Stars」

「Strongest Incarnation in Star Stream's history」

「The Iron-blooded Conquering King」

「The Usurper of the Scenarios」

The history he had lived so far was floating up as the crude, coarse sentences from the

'Ways of Survival'. The sentences gathered to become a Fable, and that story soon became the man standing before my eyes, the existence that waded past 1864 lives.

"I am Yu Jung-Hyeok."

He was not Yu Jung-Hyeok from any of the regression turns. Not from the 0th turn, not from the 1st, and not even from the 1863rd.

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He was simply Yu Jung-Hyeok from all regression turns.

[[… Captain??]]

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye dazedly looked at us, her eyes wide open in disbelief.

And then, another Yi Ji-Hye shouted out at that girl. "Master! Hurry! Take care of her!

She's trying to destroy our world-line!"

She yelled out with so much anger.

I was thinking of adding something there. However, such thoughts scattered away the moment I saw Yu Jung-Hyeok's side profile. He didn't bother to assume the attacking stance and simple stared at the two 'Outer Gods' present here.

[Character, 'Master of the Sunken Island', is looking at the character, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

[Character, 'King of Silverlight Heart', is looking at the character, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

And the two people from the 999th turn was staring back at him in return.

Yi Hyeon-Seong looked quite agitated at the moment. [[This fable… But, it can't…

Could it be, really…?]]

Just like how I was searching for the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' I knew from this particular Yu Jung-Hyeok, they were now looking for the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' they recognised.

[3rd turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is remaining silent.]

[41st turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is remaining silent.]

[362nd turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is remaining silent.]

[666th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is remaining silent.]

There was no point in becoming one anymore as Yu Jung-Hyeoks were being torn apart within those gazes. They were searching for the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' they recognised and were shoving away other 'Yu Jung-Hyeoks' in the process. They eliminated those they couldn't understand and tried so hard to find that one 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' they recognised.

And so, how long passed by like that?

[999th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is slowly opening his eyes.]

And one of them finally discovered something among the patchwork of 'Yu Jung-Hyeoks'.

[[Capt…!]

Just before the 'Master of the Sunken Island' could take a large stride forward, the air before her split apart with a single ray of light. Accompanied by choking heat, a blinding beam of light crashed down like a lightning bolt.

Yu Jung-Hyeok lightly swung his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] to deflect that beam of light.

[[That man is not the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' that you remember.]]

There was no need to ask who it could be.

[[He's simply the 'Outer God' who stole the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' we know of!]]

The 'Living Flame', 999th turn's Uriel, cried out.

She lived only for the purpose of killing the 'Secretive Plotter'. And she came this far to finally have her vengeance. The conflagration became even more vicious on her

[Flames of Retribution].

The one to try and stop her was the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.

[[H-hold on. Stop, Uriel. That 'Captain' is…!]]

[[Don't be fooled. The 'Secretive Plotter' is permeating within him. Meaning, he's the sworn enemy we've been searching for after all this time!]]

And right next moment…

[[Holy shit, so that's the captain from this world-line? Been a while, but still, he's so damn scary…]]

Finally, even the last 'King' arrived in the location.

He took a look around the battlefield, then spoke with his eyes almost bulging out of his face. [[T-there are two Ji-Hyes here?!]]

…It was the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon.

[All 'Outer God Kings' have gathered in one place!]

[Every Constellation in is paying close attention to this battlefield!]

[Every Nebula in is fearful of the advent of the fallen beings.]

[A large number of Constellations are revealing their animosity!]

They simply ignored whatever the stars were saying and quietly studied each other.

「The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

「The 'Master of the Sunken Island', the calamity of the world in the west.」

「The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the ruler of the northern universe.」

「The 'King of Silverlight Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.」

「And the 'Great Plotter' that crawls from the place of nothing.」

The plan I began cooking up bit by bit ever since I discovered their names within the book written by the 'Recorder of Fear' and deduced their identities…

I sneaked a glance at Yu Jung-Hyeok. The original plan A was actually supposed to begin from here.

- Yu Jung-Hyeok.

My signal prompted him to step forward.

The Chaotic aura of an Outer God enveloped him, and he spoke in the true voice.

[[Everyone has gathered, I see.]]

Those words contained emotions that I couldn't even fathom. However, someone present here still managed to do just that.

[[Captain. I knew it. It is you, right? But how…]]

[[You dare to use yet another underhanded method…!!]]

The [Flames of Retribution] scythed past the air and flew in. The [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] containing the power of the Transcender rose up to deflect the flames.

As the friction noises loudly tangled up with waves of magical energy, Yu Jung-Hyeok raised his voice. [[Been a while, Uriel. My old comrade-in-arms.]]

[[Shut up! You are not Yu Jung-Hyeok! You are…!!]] The 999th turn's Uriel shouted out as if she had been made fun of just now. Conflagration of destruction spread out everywhere and ignited the oxygen in the air. Within this hell of choking, hard-to-breathe dry heat, she continued to speak. [[The Yu Jung-Hyeok I knew died in that place.]]

Her Fables growled like a wounded wolf. Her expression could only be made by someone who lost something far too precious to her. And while carrying such an expression, she pointed her sword at us.

[[And it was you bastard who killed him.]]

Her Fable was crying out now.

「[I'll kill him. I'll definitely kill him. Without a doubt, I shall make sure to kill him.]」

The 999th turn's Uriel held onto Yu Jung-Hyeok's Incarnation Body wasting away due to the 'Other World Pledge' and cried in sorrow.

「[Regardless of what needs to be done, even if that means crossing world-lines, I will definitely avenge you. Even if I end up leaving the side of Good to become Evil!!]」

And so, the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' became the 'Living Flame'. She was an Archangel who chose to become an 'Outer God' for the sake of her vengeance. That was her reason for being here.

[['Yu Jung-Hyeok' doesn't die. Only the regression waits.]]

[[Shut up! Such words won't…!]]

Yu Jung-Hyeok deflected some more flames tinged with boundless rage and continued on. [[He awoke again, and lived through the 1000th turn. He then died, only to move onto the 1001st. And so, he continued to live on and on. And on.]]

I too know of that life. A life that no one remembered, a life that he couldn't share with anyone else. Yu Jung-Hyeok continued to live such a life all alone.

[[And eventually, he became me.]]

Uriel pounced, looking as if she had heard something she shouldn't have. She swung her [Flames of Retribution] in desperation, cutting his side, then slicing into his stomach. And in a blink, her blade circled around and took aim at his neck. He didn't try to stop her, as if this was the just punishment he'd been waiting for. And then…

Like magic, Uriel's blade came to a halt.

[[You, you, you… are…]]

Uriel probably knew this, too – that her vengeance could never be fulfilled. Because, the one who stole away her most precious comrade-in-arms happened to be the very same comrade, that's why.

Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke to her. [[If you want, go ahead and kill me. The 'Secretive Plotter'

who took your world-line away is none other than me, after all.]]

Uriel howled out in anguish, then cried out loudly.

Just as her sword moved again, the ocean exploded along with the loud 'Ka-boom!!'

Her sword was flung in the air. The Flames of Retribution stabbed into the ocean, and slowly sank beneath the waves while vaporising the water.

Yu Jung-Hyeok wasn't responsible for that.

Shu-wuuuu…

The cannon smoke rose up from the other side of the waves. It was the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye who fired a shell.

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[[That's enough, Uriel.]] Her voice was thickly tinged with joy and madness as she carried on. [[Yes, we know it, too. We already knew it all too well…]]

She staggered across the ocean's surface and approached this side. Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't avoid her pale hand.

[[Captain. You're inside somewhere, right? You've become something

else now, but you as you are definitely inside, right? You're still alive, right??]]

Rather than tears, Chaos flooded out from Yi Ji-Hye's eyes like fine powder seemingly made out from the pitch-black darkness. He looked at her and nodded his head.

[999th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is looking at his old comrade-in-arms.]

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye grasped onto his sleeve and slowly crumbled.

I could only look at his back. His back, where I couldn't read his expressions at all.

「It was the trickery of the world-line that caused Yu Jung-Hyeok to become many.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok who lived during the 0th turn became the 1st turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok, then he became the 2nd turn's. And the 2nd turn went on to become the 3rd – and then, the 4th.

Abnormal events of the past and future interfering with each other ran rampant and made everyone forget that crucial fact, but this was the undeniable truth.

「A regressor actually doesn't regress. What actually regresses isn't him, but everything else excluding him.」

The time for everyone else would rewind, but his own time would continue to march forward.

Even though the world-lines had split up and some became the 1864th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok while someone else became the 'Secretive Plotter', but still…

「From the beginning, he was just 'one person' who kept walking on one continuous, unbroken path.」

However, could these people be able to handle the truth?

「Someone only lived on for the sake of her revenge.」

Uriel, still raising her flames.

「Someone only lived on for the sake of continuing on with his will.」

Yi Hyeon-Seong, who couldn't shed tears anymore.

「Someone only lived on for the sake of fighting him one more time.」

Kim Nam-Woon, standing askew in the air and glaring daggers in this direction.

「And someone only lived on for the sake of reviving those times she lived alongside him.」

Yi Ji-Hye, currently crumpled, looking vacant.

Yu Jung-Hyeok told them that 'regression couldn't change anything'. However, his regression did change someone's life. The 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' was the world to these people. A world that helped them live on even after their own world-line was annihilated.

「Kim Dok-Ja's plan was precisely about this 'world'.」

If, by any chance, these people still remembered their world even now…

And, if they accepted this 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' once more as their captain, then…

「If so, then there might not be a reason to continue with this battle.」

[[If you're really the captain, then… You must know what I want, then.]] The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye smiled brightly. [[Let's go back, captain. Let's start from the beginning again.]] She held onto his wrist and spoke. [[Let's destroy this world-line together. Ng?

We made a deal with the Dokkaebi King, you see? If we destroy this world-line, he will send us back. He will get in touch with your Sponsor, the 'Most Ancient Dream', and…]]

I hurriedly looked at him.

- Yu Jung-Hyeok.

He must never stimulate them negatively here. No, he definitely needed to use the most suitable words to win them over. Even if he had to lie, he needed to agree, before it was too…

"Yi Ji-Hye."

Yu Jung-Hyeok looked at her and spoke. Not through his true voice, but with his physical voice.

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye shrunk her shoulders when subjected under his gaze. Just like on that day when she first learned to wield her sword from her master.

"Is that what you really want?"

[[…]]

"Do you believe that you'll become happy if everything reverts to how it was back then?"

[[The captain I knew, he… He'd never say things like that.]] The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye bit her lip and let go of his hand. [[He's someone who regressed 999 times. He didn't falter even when living through that inordinate amount of time. That man, he'd never say something so weak, and…]]

"A man who regressed 999 times can grow tired by the 1000th," said Yu Jung-Hyeok in a voice so honest that even I was left stunned. "Even if one endured 1000 lifetimes, one can still give up during the 1001st."

The voice was so thick with boundless fatigue that even I became dazed by it.

[[There's no way… That's not possible. The captain I remember is…!]]

"He would not give up. Indeed. However, if that's everything you remember about 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', then…"

I needed to say something. I need to tell him that he must not say these things. But I couldn't.

"…Then, that Yu Jung-Hyeok is dead."

That was his heart laid bare. A man who lived 1864 lifetimes, a man who had never truly expressed himself, had finally bared his soul.

Yi Ji-Hye cried out, sounding more like a shriek. [[Not true! That can't be true!!]]

"He shall not regress anymore."

I saw some things sparkle in the distant sky – they were stars.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is scanning the vicinity with an anxious face!]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is asking about his maknae's well-being!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', declares that he will use both of his hands this time!]

Stars that watched our stories from a very long time ago were approaching this side.

And beyond them, our companions were also rushing towards us.

Han Su-Yeong, Yu Sang-Ah, Jeong Hui-Won… The people from

who had lived with us in this world. Within the darkness brought on by the fading sunset, they looked like one giant constellation.

Yu Jung-Hyeok, now as one person, took in that sight and raised his voice.

"I can't go back. My final regression turn is this one."

Fin.

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「He took a very long time to get to that decision.」

I stared at Yu Jung-Hyeok making that declaration.

The original plan wasn't like this. He was supposed to use the memories from the 999th turn and buy as much time as possible. He was to stimulate the 'Outer Gods'

appropriately and persuade them.

"There will be no next regression for me."

Even though I was looking at a guy completely, utterly trashing my plan to bits, for some reason I didn't get angry.

「"Yu Jung-Hyeok, a former regressor."」

Only now could I truly comprehend what he said back then.

I had been thinking that the reason for the rapid growth of this turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok was down to the information I provided and the interference from other variables.

However, now I couldn't say that anymore.

The proof was the Fables rising up from Yu Jung-Hyeok's entire frame. Fables that contained not the desperation, but the will of a lifetime.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok had bet everything on this regression.」

Just like a locomotive dashing forward by exhausting every ounce of its fuel, Yu Jung-Hyeok was doing everything he possibly could to live this life.

This regression turn was not the base material for his next life.

[[… Captain, you're lying, right? Ng? You're kidding, right??]]

Yi Ji-Hye's expression creaked and distorted. It wasn't merely an expression of someone betrayed by the belief she held onto. No, that was the face of a person whose world had crumbled.

She then reached out towards that last straw she had been chasing after all this time.

Unfortunately, Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't grab that hand.

"Yi Ji-Hye. Have I ever lied to you before?"

[[… Why?]]

Explosive auras were leaking out from her entire body now. I sensed the 999th's turn's history going violently out of control.

[[Why, whywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhy]]

Fables were asking why it was not the 999th turn but us – why was it not the world they lived in, but this one?

I was about to take a step forward, but Yu Jung-Hyeok stopped me.

"Stay back."

His cheeks were trembling painfully. No matter how hard he tried to hide his emotions, he still couldn't erase his unique behaviour. I sighed softly and replied.

- We can't retreat anymore, anyway.

- Apologies.

- It's fine. This is your choice, after all.

At a casual glance, Yu Jung-Hyeok might seem like a realist, but actually, he was far more of an idealist than anyone out there. From the get-go, there was no way someone would repeatedly regress unless he doggedly held onto his ideals. And in order to protect such a dude's ideals, someone had to take on the role of a realist.

I took another step forward while looking at the waves of 'Outer Gods', about to rush in full of indignation.

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[Yu Jung-Hyeok did not choose to forsake your worldline.]

I used every ounce of my energy to use that true voice, causing the 'Outer God Kings'

to look at me. The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Kim Nam-Woon, Uriel…

[Have you all forgotten? He was never in a position to choose, but always had it chosen for him.]

He had repeatedly regressed, but Yu Jung-Hyeok had never regressed because he really wanted to. Even when he had to discard the 3rd turn and regressed to the 4th, and when he gave up on the 4th and chose to go to the 5th, it wasn't out of his will, his desire.

The regression wasn't his choice, but his fate; what chose 'it' wasn't him, but the 'story'

that desired his regression.

[We have no need to fight each other. Why must one tragedy compete against another one?] I had no idea whether these words would work or not, but even then, I simply had to say them. [We won't forsake you. We do not wish to remember you all as calamities. We want to…]

I looked up at the sky. I felt dizzy for a moment there from all the boundless gazes I hadn't seen before bearing down on me, but I didn't avoid meeting them head-on.

Just like how Yu Jung-Hyeok was not the same Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 0th turn, I too wasn't Kim Dok-Ja of the 1st scenario.

[We want to fight against that sky together with all of you.]

Beyond the skies, the stars began illuminating in sheer madness.

[The absolute majority of the Constellations can't understand your declaration!]

[Great Dokkaebis from the Bureau are shocked by your intentions!]

Indirect messages rained down like starlight. If it was before, I'd been too busy reading those messages, but now, I knew the truth.

The reality was, all those starlights in the sky were nothing more than ornaments to hide the fact that the darkness existed there.

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[The 'King of Stories' is now looking at you.]

It was then I heard a very faint chuckle.

[[Oii, do you even know what you're talking about? Are you saying that you want to destroy ?]] The snide voice belonged to the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon. [[You think we haven't tried that before?]]

The depths of emotions contained within his voice was unfathomable.

He was smiling, but he wasn't really smiling.

That exaggerated smile hid the sense of resignation deep within.

[[We already tried that. We shot down all the Constellations, and we even killed the Dokkaebi King of our world-line, too. You know what happened when we did?]]

Kim Nam-Woon walked on the ocean's surface and stood right before me.

And as if to transmit the sweetest despair known to men, he whispered to me next.

[[The world just vanished.]]

I silently listened to his words.

[[We definitely cleared the scenarios properly. We even completed all the conditions, yet… We lost everything we loved. There was no miracle, no reward at the end of the line.]]

I recalled the words uttered out by the 999th turn's Uriel.

「If the disappears, the whole universe will fall into chaos. Such a world-line must never be created. That is the way of Evil.」

That's what she said when I mentioned my goal of destroying the .

Kim Nam-Woon continued on. [[You know what we saw at the end of the world?]]

[You probably saw a massive wall. A great wall that surrounds all of the worlds, the one where you can't even see its beginning or the end.]

[[… And how do you even know that?]]

[Because, that's where our true goal is, too. What we want to achieve isn't simply the destruction of .] I repeated with my own voice what the 'Secretive Plotter' told me earlier. [And it's to eliminate the ringleader of all these tragedies hiding behind that 'Final Wall'.]

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon stared at me as if he was greatly shocked by this revelation.

His lips bobbed up and down many times before he finally roared out. [[No one can go past the 'Final Wall'! That's…]]

[[Nam-Woon-ah. These people, they possess the 'Final Key' that might allow them to go over the 'Final Wall'.]]

Yi Hyeon-Seong raised his voice.

Kim Nam-Woon alternated his gaze between Yi Hyeon-Seong and me, looking utterly confused. I simply nodded my head towards him.

[The 'Outer God Kings' are getting agitated by your announcement!]

[Your declaration is causing a rapid change in the '98th scenario'!]

[A large number of Constellations are indignant of your choice!]

It was fine if the stars didn't want to side with us. It was also fine if other Nebulas didn't want to join us, either.

However, if these four decided to stand on our side…

If these 'Kings' that lived through the 999th turn remained in this world-line and fought alongside us, then…

[[… Let's say that you possess such a 'key'.]]

The moment I heard that voice, I felt a chill run down my spine.

[[In that case, is there a reason for me not to snatch that key away from you?]]

The moment Kim Nam-Woon's shortsword got closer in the blink of an eye and took aim at my neck…

Claaang!

The sword's trajectory streaming before my eyes deflected his shortsword.

As the heavy impact force resounded out, both Yu Jung-Hyeok and Kim Nam-Woon were forced back a couple of steps.

[[[Hahaha! This is it! This is that feeling!]]

Blood trickled down the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss's' hand after that collision against the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

[[Do you have any idea how long I've been waiting for this? Do you know how long I had to wander aimlessly just for a chance to fight against you?!]]

The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the being who travelled through the inordinate amount of time just to revive that one opponent he had been idolising.

[Great Fable, 'Delusional Design', has begun its storytelling!]

The 999th turn's Uriel supported the wobbling Yi Ji-Hye and got into the battle stance as well. [[You told me this once before. If, by any chance, you've become another existence that's not you, you wanted me to kill you personally.]]

Along with the blinding explosion, the sun in the air began emitting light once more.

[[Looks like that time is now.]]

What blocked the outpouring of the heatwave was the forged steel completely filling up our view.

- You must escape. I can't stop them by myself.

The 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong was different from the others as he wasn't summoned as the 'calamity'. Meaning, unlike them, he didn't enjoy the 'grace of the scenario'.

"Kim Dok-Ja!"

Almost at the same time, my companions arrived on site.

Han Su-Yeong flying on the back of the Black Flame Dragon was the first to ask. "What happened here??"

"As you can see."

She bit down on her lip, hard.

I didn't say anything else and instead, looked at my companions. At Jeong Hui-Won, Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Gil-Yeong, Yi Ji-Hye, and Yu Sang-Ah…

"This is the final hurdle."

They should also probably guessed it.

"I ask of you this. Please, make sure not to die."

At least during this fight, even I was helpless to protect my companions.

Kwa-aaaaah!

Along with the impact force akin to heaven and earth upending, violent tsunami waves and sunlight intermingled. Blades clashing against each other could be spied within the rising white foams trying to blind our view.

The blackish light sliced into the ocean.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was fighting – while enduring against the combined

assaults of the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon and Uriel, he was displaying a shocking level of martial prowess.

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

The hidden, shored-up power strong enough to contend with two 'Kings', now that was Yu Jung-Hyeok's true strength. Every Fable he had built up all this time was exploding forth simultaneously.

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['Disconnected Film Theory's' connection is incomplete!]

[Cracks are developing in the Fable's continuity!]

Unfortunately, the balance couldn't be maintained forever.

"Dok-Ja-ssi."

I shifted my head to find Jeong Hui-Won there. The Archangel's blinding wings were spreading out from her back.

The Beast Lord Shin Yu-Seung, the Naval Admiral Yi Ji-Hye, and the Emperor of Steelsword, Yi Hyeon-Seong. My comrades who lived a different life compared to the original storyline, and thus were currently marching towards a different resolution.

We glanced at each other and nodded.

"I'll help Jung-Hyeok-ssi, so the rest of you, please take care of that side!"

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is unleashing her Status!]

Jeong Hui-Won spread her wings wide and flew towards Yu Jung-Hyeok under the blessing of Uriel. It seemed that that was the

Archangel's choice. She now knew that the 'Outer God King' happened to be herself from the far-flung distant future, so…

[[I told you this before. Without the Nebula's grace, you can't oppose me.]]

The [Flames of Retribution] soaring through the sky as if to puncture it was now crashing back down towards the ocean.

However, we had no time to worry about Jeong Hui-Won. Because, there was yet another existence pouring out her boundless Status in our direction at the moment.

Among the parting, exploding waves, the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was staring at us with her hollow eyes.

"Everyone, please evade!"

Yu Sang-Ah stepped forward and distorted the time and space. Unfortunately, Sakyamuni's ability was useless when facing the true might of that 'Outer God King'.

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Along with the loud ripping noise, the distorted time/space was forcibly spread open.

The battleship of the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was now rising up from the depths of the ocean. The [Turtle Dragon] of the 'Master of the Sunken Island' resembled more of an island rather than a ship at this stage.

"Ahjussi!"

Sensing the danger, Shin Yu-Seung had her [Chimera Dragon] spew out its Breath. And when she did, all aquatic creatures hiding below the water's surface rushed out, as well.

Gyaaaah-ooooh!

Monsters screeching out viciously pounced on the battleship's hull. However, the island was simply far too large for them to stop. The loud noises of monsters being crushed could be heard next. The wide expanse of the ocean vibrated heavily and the tsunami wave rolled out.

"Hyung, take a step back! Hurry!"

"Kim Dok-Ja, disappear to the back already, will ya?!"

My companions surrounded me as if to protect me and began desperately fighting back.

I was aware of why they were doing this, of course. And I also knew what they were scared of, too.

[[I, I only have to erase everything.]] The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was crying out beyond the tidal waves. [[Everything, it can be made anew. It's nothing at all. Then, captain will realise it, too! He will know that this world can be destroyed at any time. That it's possible, that the world we lived in was the real deal…!!]]

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

A huge tsunami crashed in, accompanied by the round of cannon shelling vicious enough to blow up the entire ocean. The wave's scale was the largest we had ever seen.

If that thing continued on its way, then even if my mother was there, the Korean

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Peninsula was as good as finished.

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling!]

Han Su-Yeong's expression changed for the worse as she shouted out. "Kim Dok-Ja! If you do anything stupid…!"

"Don't worry."

I lightly patted her shoulder and stepped forward. The scenes of the scenarios we experienced together flitted in and out of my view.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

Every time a new Great Fable was created, I had to risk certain death. I believed that was the only way, and thought that was the correct way.

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is looking at you.]

The constrictive headband, this shackle that my companions personally placed on me, tightened on my head. When I was earning that Great Fable, I didn't die. I knew very well that this was their intentions.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

The tsunami wave got closer and closer. This power wasn't something even a Myth-grade could stop.

「However, Kim Dok-Ja knew a way to deal with this tsunami wave.」

Back during the last scenario of the original storyline, when Yu Jung-Hyeok was waging the final war against the 'Outer Gods', there was a similar moment to this one.

At that time, there was a certain Constellation beside Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[Constellation. 'Most Ancient Liberator', is now looking at you.]

A single 'Myth-grade Constellation' couldn't deal with the 'great apocalypse'. However, what if there were two?

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is looking at the 'Most Ancient Liberator'.]

I would never sacrifice myself ever again. I'd not leave my companions behind. Just like how Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't want to give up on this life, I shall not give up even until the end.

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

The sole 'Great Fable' that I possessed that could become the power to fight off against the 'Outer God King' – however, I wasn't the one possessing the greatest share of this Great Fable.

"Great Sage!"

I sensed four rings connecting with each other inside my head.

['Meihouwang' is agreeing to your request.]

['Bimawen' is agreeing to your request.]

['Douzhanshengfo' is agreeing to your request.]

The overflowing Fable began transforming my Incarnation Body.

['Great Sage Heaven's Equal' is agreeing to your request.]

My hair grew in an instant and changed to platinum colour. The aura of boundless Fable flowed like rapid torrents within all of my veins. And then, I felt the fulfilling sensation of the Ruyi Jingu Bang's grip in my hand.

[The power of five 'Sun Wukongs' have incarnated into your Incarnation Body!]

The golden-hued Status settled on top of my coat. The battlefield of the Tongtian was being recreated above the surrounding ocean.

Just as the lightning bolt struck, I heard the familiar voice.

[Let's go, maknae-ya.]

I nodded my head.

Fin.

Kwa-aaaaah!

The Great Sage's Status enveloping my entire body now concentrated on the [Ruyi Jingu Bang] held in my right hand. Just like that day on the Tongtian, when we were fighting against the Constellations.

If there was one thing different, then I was now using the complete power of that 'Sun Wukong'.

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones' has completely permeated in you!]

"I shall open up a path."

I swung the [Ruyi Jingu Bang] and a huge hole opened up in the centre of the tsunami wave. However, it was filled back up in an instant.

[Youcantyoucantyoucantyoucantyoucant]

From the island that the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye had brought up, the 'Nameless Ones'

began crawling out. Their number was so great that fighting them seemed impossible, but even then, the Great Sage didn't panic at all.

[Destroy them.]

I felt this jolt from the arm raised up in the air, and thick, gloomy clouds suddenly filled up the sky. Somersault clouds carrying thunderbolts rang around within the heavens above. Then, blinding blue rays of light crashed on the ocean.

Kwa-booooom!!

Several strands of lightning smacked into the sea and tore through everything there to carve out a path. These bolts of lightning continued to smash down many more times. What an enormous amount of Status that was.

This was the power of the one who had reached the last scenario, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, often referred to as the strongest Constellation ever was.

[Gah-gahk, gagagagagahk?]

However, there were several creatures that managed to withstand the storm of lightning bolts. They were slightly larger than the previous Outer Gods.

[We ki ll the Con stel lat ions]

[End of sta rs dra ws ne ar]

These 'Outer Gods' could string along more concise words. These

upper rank creatures travelled through the underwater tunnel and rose up to the ocean's surface.

"Son of a…!"

Han Su-Yeong next to us cried out.

Ku-gugugugu!

The ground beneath the ocean rocked and lava began boiling up to the surface.

"Everyone, get away!"

We quickly climbed aboard Yi Ji-Hye's [Turtle Dragon] and rose up to the sky. The hazy surface of the ocean was soon filled up with wiggling creatures.

[De stru cti on of the wor ldli ne is co ming]

The 'Outer Gods' descended to this world while spewing out some ominous-sounding lines. We had encountered a creature like that before – during the earlier days of the scenario, on the battlefield of the [Dark Castle].

['The 4th Wall' is faintly stirring.]

Perhaps, the [Devourer of Dream], now acting as a librarian inside the wall, was watching this spectacle as well.

"How are we supposed to kill those things??"

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Han Su-Yeong gritted her teeth and emitted [Black Flame] from both of her hands.

Tentacles several kilometres long rose up above the ocean at the same time, causing the tidal waves messily mixed in with magma to rise up

even taller than mountain ranges.

For some reason, I recalled a certain sentence from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「The calamity flooding out from the rising island eventually covered up everything on the surface of the planet.」

If this went on, then the Earth of this worldline would end up exactly in that state, too.

"Great Sage!"

I borrowed the power of the Great Sage and faced off against the incoming tidal waves.

The Ruyi Jingu Bang grew in size in the blink and began smacking away the 'Nameless Ones' trying to get closer. I destroyed a building-sized wave and smashed apart a tentacle flying in. However, there was no end in sight.

「The tidal wave simply grew larger and larger.」

If I managed to beat back one wave, then the second showed up. When I destroyed that, the third one pounced on us. And at the centre of all these waves were the 'Master of the Sunken Island' and other 'Outer God Kings'.

[…It's not going to be easy this time.]

Even the Great Sage was saying something like that.

At this rate, we'd be finished even before our enemies get here.

"Is there any other way to break past that?"

[Need more time.]

After leaving those words, the Great Sage began gathering more Status. My heart rapidly grew warmer and the Fable in my veins circulated quickly. Since I knew what he was preparing for, I didn't bother to ask anymore. If my thoughts were correct, then he was getting ready to use that skill from the final pages of the 'Ways of the Survival'.

The question was, could my companions and me last until then?

「In order to buy time, we need to combine our strengths.」

No matter how excellent both Uriel and the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon were as Constellations, it was still too difficult for them to endure. Not to mention, there were four 'Kings' that side.

…Wait, four?

Kwa-rurururu!

The shield of steel slapped away several tentacles flying in.

I looked at those huge shoulders standing before me and spoke. "Hyeon-Seong-ssi."

The 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong looked back at me, half of his expression filled with worry, and the other half, confusion.

"We need your help. Please, help us stop the calamity."

He quietly stared at me before asking a question. [[Can you promise me?]]

I didn't ask what that promise was, because I felt like I already knew.

"I don't know if I can protect it, but I'll do my best."

He stared at me for a bit longer, then his eyes blinked slowly. And right next moment, his eyes shone in the silvery light.

[[I shall believe in you Fable.]]

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Massive branches of steel sprouted from the sides of our ship. They grew in an instant and became walls on four sides. While crashing into the waves and the 'Nameless Ones', they continued their rapid

expansion.

A short while later, a square pathway with an open centre was created before our eyes.

It was a tunnel created by the advancing walls of steel.

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[[Please go ahead.]]

I nodded and began running on the tunnel.

How long did we run like that? I spotted a familiar face at the end of the tunnel.

"Hui-Won-ssi!"

Jeong Hui-Won was busy swinging her sword in the middle of the 'Nameless Ones'.

Companions and I quickly crossed the tunnel and aided her.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't break past them."

She bit her lower lip and muttered out in bitterness. Her voice was thick with despair.

She couldn't even get near the 999th turn's Uriel and ended up too preoccupied with cutting down these 'Nameless Ones' pouncing on her from the sky.

[Gyah-ahahahah]

The steel walls shook heavily while emitting crunching noises. 'Outer Gods' were frantically pouncing on them as if they'd devour us in an instant.

If we took just one step outside these walls, then they'd really rip us apart like piranhas, that's for sure.

Crunch, cruuuunch…

The sounds of the 'Nameless Ones' gnawing on the metal walls could be heard next.

"Danger…!"

And then, the 'Nameless Ones' rushed towards us from the exit of the tunnel. They pounced on us like rabid dogs, their slobbering tongues wildly wagging.

[Ah, aaaaaah!]

In the next second, though, something akin to bright light fell from the sky and sliced apart every single one of them before our eyes. Someone had carved up the tunnel we were standing in from the outside.

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We were treated to the sight of the great apocalypse's battlefield outside the sliced-open tunnel.

The dead 'Nameless Ones' created huge islands of corpses. While looking at this horrible sight of forgotten Fables dying meaningless deaths, the children began retching uncontrollably.

I too became speechless and looked at this battlefield.

Someone murmured in a tearful voice.

"Just why, to go this far…”

This was the 'great apocalypse'. The scenario that Yu Jung-Hyeok from the original storyline had to fight through. And even now, that very Yu Jung-Hyeok was fighting against the 'Outer God Kings' in the middle of this great battlefield.

Boooom!!

There seemed to be flashes of light on one side of the empty sky, only for an echo of explosion noise to reverberate all the way to the other side. Some things moved with speed that my eyes could barely chase after. The ones that sliced apart the tunnel we stood in were engaged in a bitter battle.

I even forgot that we were in a battlefield and was lost in that scene for a little while.

[Great Fable, 'Delusional Design', is loudly yapping on!]

[Great Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The strongest beings from the forgotten worldline were busy competing with the Fables. The torrents of [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] and the [Hellfire] resisting it, and then the remnants of the [Black Flame] mixed in to create a massive tornado.

Strong winds generated from the sword images collided among the gloomy clouds, and ancient Fables howled on like aged dragons. Fables were screaming as if to tear the sky apart.

The living histories were colliding and extinguishing right before our eyes. And at the centre of all the stories was Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

We couldn't afford to waste the precious time he had bought for us. I pointed to our front and spoke. "The cause of these waves is the 'Sunken Island' itself."

The 'Nameless Ones' flooded in like dust clouds. Then, upper-rank Outer Gods raising up even more waves behind them. And finally, the 'Sunken Island' in the centre of them all.

Most likely, the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was in the middle of that island.

"Our priority is to demolish that island. The most optimal course of action is to subdue the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye, but…"

I took a look beyond the encroaching waves. If the culprit behind this 'great apocalypse' event, the 'Master of the Sunken Island' Yi Ji-Hye, was subdued, the disaster itself should peter out, but the problem was with how to get there.

Han Su-Yeong spoke up.

"Don't forget, the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon and Uriel is over there, too. Even if Yu Jung-Hyeok is facing off against Uriel, what will you do about Kim Nam-Woon?"

"Don't worry. I have a plan."

Even now, we were at a disadvantage in our combat strength. Well, we had already exhausted a considerable amount of energy during the earlier fights, after all.

However, we weren't completely on the back foot, either.

"Gil-Yeong-ah, Yu-Seung-ah. Release the insects and monsters to stop the movements of the Outer Gods as much as possible. Yu Sang-Ah-ssi, if you see an opening, try to cast one more debuff on that Yi Ji-Hye, please. Han Su-Yeong, you take care of the

'Nameless Ones' showing up in our rear."

"What about you?"

"I'll create a path. Hui-Won-ssi, please come with me."

The moment Jeong Hui-Won nodded her head, I unleashed my Status.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is unleashing his Status!]

With excellent timing, I sensed Yi Hyeon-Seong's Fable enveloping my body next. The outer layer created through the [Steel Transformation] sprouted above my skin. We certainly made the right call to go to first. We definitely needed his [Fable metal]

in order to efficiently destroy the outer layers of those 'Nameless Ones'.

"Now, everyone!"

We leapt above the steel walls in the air simultaneously and then, descended towards the tidal wave.

'Outer Gods' noticed our movements and howled out at the same time.

Du-dudududu!

Gong Pil-Du's shells, now coated with the [Fable metal], flew in from afar to penetrate cleanly through the outer layers of the 'Nameless Ones'. Using the sounds of the cannons as our interludes, we ran on top of the waves.

Tentacles flew in at us with no gaps in between them, but Han Su-Yeong burned them away.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is roaring out!]

The [Black Flame]'s fires caused the Outer Gods to scream in pain.

Jeong Hui-Won and I continued to run on this path. We felt the time/space surrounding the island faintly distort. Yu Sang-Ah was activating her powers now.

"Dok-Ja-ssi, over there!"

We saw the gigantic [Turtle Dragon] taking up the highest location of the island in the distance. The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was standing on top of the ship's figurehead to command the 'Outer Gods'.

[[Hahahat, where do you think you're going?!]] As if he was waiting for us, the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon revealed himself. [[I shall protect our Ji-Hye!]]

Even though he was in the middle of fighting Yu Jung-Hyeok, he must've had enough leeway to interfere with us. Maybe, Yu Jung-Hyeok was in some kind of danger right now. I gave the signal to Jeong Hui-Won.

"Don't worry about me and go help Yu Jung-Hyeok first. I'm sure he's slowly reaching his limit by now."

"Don't get killed. Understand?"

Jeong Hui-Won spread open her wings and disappeared in order to aid Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[[Isn't that so sweet? But, don't you worry. I'll send both of you away in an instant!]]

Kim Nam-Woon's figure seemed to melt. His shadow split apart into hundreds and countless figures leapt out from them.

「Kim Dok-Ja thought to himself. He couldn't dodge this.」

Hundreds, no, thousands of daggers were unilaterally aiming for my body. They moved as if they were alive. The peak of 'knife fighting' Kim Nam-Woon had comprehended was permeating within each and every one of those blade tips. And each attack was strong enough to leave a fatal wound. Even then, I quietly smiled.

"When I met you for the first time, you also wielded your knife at me."

[[But, it's my first time meeting you?]]

"Kim Nam-Woon, aren't you curious how you of this world died?"

One of Kim Nam-Woon's clones frowned after hearing me. [[Who cares how that weakling got killed??]]

I used the [Ruyi Jingu Bang] to deflect the incoming daggers. A few of them still managed to leave behind deep cuts on my thigh and shoulder, but thankfully, Yi Hyeon-Seong's [Fable metal] defended against the attacks in my stead.

Unfortunately, even his forged steel began developing cracks at the

vicious barrage of attacks raining down.

As if to fully recreate a certain memory, I started evading the incoming attacks.

「Waist, right side.」

「Right eye.」

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「Left thigh.」

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…

Faint sparks danced about. I took a step back after getting hit by two more daggers.

"You were trash in this worldline. A thug who killed a powerless old man just to clear the first scenario."

[[That's what the first scenario was about, anyway. I ain't curious about such shit…!]]

"You wielded the dagger just like now, until you ended up on your knees begging for your life like a pathetic loser. And then, died miserably after your head exploded."

For the first time ever, his movement came to a stop. His previous mischievous expression was nowhere to be found, only his glare aimed at me remaining.

"Aren't you curious about who killed you like that?"

The dagger was now aiming for my left eye.

"Oh the sword forged to cut down the sleeping giants. Descend to this place, now!"

Kwa-aaaaaah!

Everything before my eyes seemed to wane as the massive storm of aftermath raged on. A steel giant was summoned through the dimensions and it now stood there imposingly.

The greatest Fable weapon in [Tartarus], Pluto. A bright voice belonging to Kim Nam-Woon came out from its cockpit.

[Hahahat! Hey, Grasshopper man, been a while…]

However, I couldn't smile back to him. Because, what I was about to do should prove to be very inhumane to this guy.

[Ng? What's this?]

Kim Nam-Woon discovered something small floating before his nose and tilted his

head. Almost at the same time, the other Kim Nam-Woon muttered in sheer dumbfoundedness.

[[… A giant robot???]]

[Uwaaaaahk?!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

[Same existences from different worldlines have met for the first time!]

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon didn't possess a Fable of fighting against me.

However, what about now?

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

Memories were connecting; as the two existences from different worldlines met each other, the unconnected Fable momentarily would

become one.

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon, the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', glared at me with his brows arched up high. It seemed that he had realised everything.

[[You…]]

"That's right. The one who killed you in this worldline is…”

The surrounding time and space transformed. Into that of the subway from the first scenario. To the place where I killed Kim Nam-Woon.

I grinned and continued on.

['Stage Transformation' is activating!]

"It was none other than me."

Fin.

[Fable, 'Master of Steel', has begun its storytelling!]

The walls of steel created by 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong blanketed the surroundings and expanded rapidly. This power was strong enough to even defend the entire planet when deployed within .

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

The expanding steel intertwined with the 「Stage Transformation」

and began creating the partitions of the subway.

This stage was utterly familiar to me. Even now, just by closing my eyes I'd be able to vividly recall this cabin from the first scenario.

[A Myth-grade Constellation's 'Stage' has been generated!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Now originally, 「Stage Transformation」 was quite similar to augmented reality. In other words, the surrounding topography wouldn't change simply because it had been transformed into a stage.

However, the case this time was slightly different.

[is paying close attention to your 'Stage'.]

[The absolute majority of Constellations are watching the 'Stage'.]

[Great Dokkaebis are jealous of your 'Stage'.]

[Due to the large number of gazes, the stage grade of the 'Stage Transformation' is increasing!]

's Probability was directly linked to the number of gazes watching on. A scenario that a large number of beings watched was able to generate a powerful Fable, and a stage watched by many could generate sizeable impact in return.

The anticipation carried within those countless gazes could shift the Probability, in other words.

「On that day, the Demon of Delusions and the Demon King of Salvation met for the first time in that place.」

And the shifting Probability could sometimes turn 'fake' into 'reality'.

[Due to the effects of the 'Disconnected Film Theory', the

materialisation of the 'Stage Transformation' is incomplete!]

[Within the applicable stage, the Characters 'Kim Nam-Woon' and the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss' will be treated as the same individual.]

[The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss's' stage compatibility is 87.351%!]

[The possibility of a sudden end exists.]

The fake becoming real on stage could only occur for a brief period of time. While everyone was focusing here, before the mysteriousness of this stage came undone – I had to finish everything.

[[You…!!]]

I unhesitantly approached Kim Nam-Woon. I didn't sense myself growing any stronger from the effects of the Stage Transformation. However, I was filled with confidence, instead. The kind that a wolf might feel when hunting down a rabbit.

[[What kind of dogshit is this?!]]

The enraged 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon pounced on me. Since he was under the influence of the 「Stage Transformation」, his mobility had become quite sluggish, as if he was that Kim Nam-Woon from the first scenario whose average stat points didn't even reach 10.

The problem was, my own body was no different from back then during the first

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scenario, too.

Swiiish!

I lowered my head and dodged the dagger. I was reading the direction of his attacks through the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] so evading him wasn't that difficult.

[The rules of the 'first scenario' will apply to the applicable 'Stage'!]

[Incarnation Bodies within the 'Stage' will grow stronger by killing another life.]

Memories continued to resurface.

Right. We fought like this back in the first scenario. Just for the sake of 100 Coins as our survival fee, people had to die.

Just for those 100 Coins, people killed each other.

We managed to survive such a world.

[Many Constellations are recalling their 'first scenarios'.]

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon pressed down on his temples as if he was suffering from migraine, then began cackling at me. [[Haha… So, this is how you want to play it?

Quite interesting.]]

"But, you don't look like you're enjoying yourself at all?"

His glare was filled with the prickly killing intent.

[The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss's' stage compatibility has decreased slightly!]

Even if the effects of the 「Stage Transformation」 was absolute, this particular stage was recreated through a simple trick. The longer I took, the weaker the connection between the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon to his 3rd turn counterpart would become.

[What the hell, grasshopper man! What's going on here? What's happening?!]

The 3rd turn's Kim Nam-Woon raised himself up in the corner. He had been altered into a small toy robot due to the effects of the 「Stage Transformation」. He

awkwardly clung onto my leg.

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon saw this scene and muttered out.
[[How disappointing.

To think that I'd get killed by a bastard like him and end up as a trashcan robot.]]

[What the hell are you talking about? You wanna die, buddy?? Hey, grasshopper man!

Kill that son of a bitch!]

[If there is no killing taking place in the next five minutes, all Incarnation Bodies within the cabin will be exterminated!]

This would be my first time seeing the 「Stage Transformation」 imposing such a strict restriction.

Wasn't this almost at the level of an actual main scenario?

[[Die!]]

The dagger sliced the air and flew right in. I used the surrounding objects to dodge the attacks. The movements of my body might have become dull, but I was not the same Kim Dok-Ja as I used to be back then.

Kim Nam-Woon's attacks scratched the subway's steel doors and floors. The power behind each of his thudding attacks was gradually getting stronger.

The aura of Chaos was faintly swirling around him. The effects of the 「Stage Transformation」 on him was already declining. The odds of victory would tilt towards his favour if this continued on.

However, the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon seemed to be getting more and more anxious, instead.

[Character, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', is getting agitated.]

[Character, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', is urgently surveying his surroundings.]

Why was this? Why did his complexion look so poor? I took a closer look to find his cheeks and neck soaked in cold sweat.

[Character, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', detests this space.]

[[You rat-like bastard…!!]]

[A portion of Constellations are suspicious of the 'Outer God King's' Status.]

[A small number of Constellations are scorning the small fry-like utterance.]

The movements of the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon were getting simpler perhaps due to his increasing anxiety.

[If there is no killing taking place in the next three minutes, all Incarnation Bodies within the cabin will be exterminated!]

Three minutes remained.

"Dok-Ja-ssi? What's going on here…?"

And that was when I heard a certain voice. Kim Nam-Woon and I both turned our heads in the direction of where that voice came from.

And immediately, chills ran down on my spine.

「There was another who bore witness to their fight in that place.」

I had forgotten about it.

「The most righteous person in the carriage number 3807 on that day.」

…That I and Kim Nam-Woon weren't the only people riding in that subway that day.

[[Hahahahaha!!!]]

Kim Nam-Woon exploded in the fit of maddened laughter, abandoned me, and rushed towards Yu Sang-Ah.

Perhaps due to the effects of the 「Stage Transformation」, she was now kitted out in the uncomfortable outfit she had on during the first scenario.

He closed the distance in an instant and his dagger was swung towards her.

As the blade scythed the air with a sharp swish…

Slice-!

Sliced strands of hair danced in the air. Yu Sang-Ah and her hardened expression were using agile movements to evade Kim Nam-Woon's attacks. As a matter of fact, she was far more agile than I was.

[[Not bad!]]

[Character, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', has received the effects of 'Blackening'!]

However, his movements should grow faster and faster with passing time.

「On that day, the Demon of Delusions came to understand his new world.」

The effects of the Stage Transformation was getting stronger.

「… That a new set of rules was needed in a brand new world.」

I could see Yu Sang-Ah's complexion getting paler and paler.

There was no time. I needed to find a way. Somehow I…

"Hyung."

A small hand tugged at my clothes.

「If that boy didn't catch any insects that day… 」

Yi Gil-Yeong was also here, with a babyish face of a young boy. He looked exactly like how I remembered during the first scenario.

The boy in despair after losing his parent was extending his palm out with a determined expression.

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is laughing ominously.]

Several bright-yellow grasshoppers rested on the boy's palm.

"Thanks."

I grabbed the grasshoppers and started running. The insects were then crushed along with crunching noises.

[You killed a lifeform.]

[Your Incarnation Body has been strengthened due to the effects of the Stage Transformation!]

[You killed a lifeform.]

[Your Incarnation Body has been strengthened due to the effects of the Stage Transformation!]

…

My physical strength increased explosively as I ran inside the cabin.

The back of Kim Nam-Woon's head, currently cackling away like a madman, was now right before my nose.

[[Die! Die!! Die! Dieeee!]]

I simply grabbed the nape of his neck and slammed the bastard down on the subway's floor. His legs trembled like an insect being crushed.

[[You son of a…!]]

He swiftly jumped out from my grasp and swung his dagger in my direction. I didn't bother to dodge that.

Kah-gagagagak!

Because, there was no need to.

「The knife continued to leave behind scratches. Although blood did trickle down, the blade failed to gouge out the flesh beneath the skin.」

The final scenes of the first scenario flitted past my view as if it was overlapping with reality.

Kim Nam-Woon's attacks continued to get faster, but he failed to break past Yi Hyeon-Seong's strengthened [Steel Transformation].

[[This, just what the hell is this…]]

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon spat out expletives and wielded his dagger. However, no matter how many times he swung it, there was no use.

Because, the end of this 'Stage' was already set in stone.

"Looks like you only have two minutes remaining."

[[Uwaaaaaah!!]]

Kim Nam-Woon and his distorted expression swung his dagger indiscriminately. Only his poor blade ended up breaking, however,

and it fell to the ground. One minute thirty seconds, then one minute twenty… As time continued to tick down, Kim Nam-Woon's figure slowly crumbled to the ground.

It wasn't because he simply lost all his strength. What attacked him was a sin far more fundamental in nature.

「The foundational Fable of Kim Nam-Woon, the Demon of Delusion.」

The surrounding space began distorting; the pool of blood was now spreading on the once-empty floor of the cabin. It was not the blood we had shed.

[[There's, there's just no way…!]]

The shivering 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon plopped down on the spot.

[Great Fable, 'Delusional Design', is losing control!]

Right here in this place was where his Fable, 'Delusional Design' had germinated.

Kim Nam-Woon relied on [Abnormal Adaptability] to forge a new world he had to live in – but what about the version of him who had witnessed the end of that 'world'?

What kind of meaning did that world hold for him?

[[C-crap like t-this, won't…!]]

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Corpses on the floor were glaring at us, their eyes wide open.

Those that I failed to protect – those with their heads missing or their hearts pierced through. Those dying while vomiting blood were now looking at us.

Kim Nam-Woon's face shook hard as if he was having a seizure. It was an expression that didn't suit him.

"Are you feeling the guilt after having come this far?"

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon trembled and looked up at me, his lips bobbing up and down.

「"You're right, I'm trash. So what??"」

Kim Nam-Woon from the initial regression turns would've definitely said that.

However, even such a guy had said something different during the 999th turn.

「"… I've been thinking about this sometimes. Maybe I should've been the one to die that day. Captain, you also think that way, don't you?"」

The psychopath, Kim Nam-Woon, the Demon of Delusion.

Even after I finished reading the entirety of the original novel, my opinion on that guy hadn't changed.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

However, that couldn't have been Kim Nam-Woon's everything. The 'Ways of Survival'

I read was no doubt nothing more than just the tip of an iceberg called this world.

And so, the 'Kim Nam-Woon' I didn't know must have existed somewhere, too.

Kim Nam-Woon, who ended up seeing a world's end for someone's sake.

Kim Nam-Woon, capable of wandering aimlessly for forty thousand years out of his love for someone.

Kim Nam-Woon, carrying on the sake of protecting his loyalty to his comrades.

What if such a Kim Nam-Woon existed in the world somewhere…?

And what if such a Kim Nam-Woon was the one who saw the end of the 999th turn…?

[[I, I… I…]]

His delusion was being eaten away.

That was the history he endured on by exchanging away his personality; the ego of the Kim Nam-Woon, a second-year student from Cheongil High School, was now leaking out from its hidden spot beneath his mask.

[[I… I killed… them… That's right, I…]]

The shivering Kim Nam-Woon held his broken dagger and began sobbing away.

"Right. You did kill them."

As I said that, I took a look at the rear of the subway.

I saw Yi Hyeon-Seong's steel tunnel, now merged with the 「Stage Transformation」.

And this near-endless tunnel was overflowing with corpses.

The 'Nameless Ones', their names now long forgotten, were crying out.

"And they are the people I didn't save."

「A new world requires a new story.」

That was the price for completing the 'One Single Fable'.

We lived for the purpose of completing this petty 'gi-seung-jeon-gyeol'.

[Your 'hidden scenario' is on the verge of completion!]

[All of your Fables are desiring your 'Conclusion'!]

[Every Constellation in can sense that your 'Conclusion' is drawing near!]

And now, I had to see the end of this damn story.

[[Ah, aaah, aaaah…!]]

The focus in Kim Nam-Woon's eyes blurred and he brought the tip of the broken blade closer to his neck.

[15 seconds remaining until the application of the 'Stage Transformation's' rules.]

[Once the time limit has been reached, all Incarnations who didn't obey the rules will be killed instantly.]

Yu Sang-Ah and Yi Gil-Yeong were looking at this side. Even the 3rd turn's Kim Nam-Woon, currently in the figure of a toy robot, was looking at me also.

If the time limit elapsed in this fashion, then the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon would die for sure on this stage. The stage itself might be fake, but his Fable infused to this place was all real.

He'd die in this place. Just like those he had killed. Or, like how it was for him in the 3rd turn.

He'd die a miserable death while accepting his 'life'.

The problem, however, was with the 3rd turn's Kim Nam-Woon. He'd also perish due to the fact that he was connected to his 999th turn counterpart through the

'Disconnected Film Theory'.

I couldn't let that happen.

[The 'Stage Transformation' has been cancelled!]

The surrounding landscape changed and the stage disappeared. The memories connected through the [Disconnected Film Theory] were fading away. The subway scattered away, and all the actors involved also returned to their previous positions.

However, the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon remained on his knees.

Certain stories, despite being fake, possessed power as if they were real deal. The stage might be gone now, but the original sin didn't go away.

His ruined and frayed Fable was scattering away. I quietly stared at him and his

lowered head, before lightly kicking away the dagger he was still holding.

"Kim Nam-Woon, you can't be saved."

Then, I pulled out the [Unbreakable Faith]. The gleaming white swordlight seemed to screech out from the blade. I deliberately raised the sword up high so that everyone could see me. And then…

[Every Constellation of is waiting expectantly of the 'Outer God King's'

death!]

[[No!!]]

Along with a horrifying, desperate cry coming from somewhere, my [Unbreakable Faith] cut something down.

Fin.

Pah-su-sut.

The traces of a Fable stained the [Unbreakable Faith]. Thick smoke arose from this burning Fable.

What used to be someone's history was now scattering away as ashes.

Kim Nam-Woon's blood-soaked white hair strands were hooked on the edge of the sword.

「This was Kim Dok-Ja's choice.」

I watched his hair scatter away within this ash-grey smoke and opened my mouth.

"When I was young, I really hated you."

When I was still absorbed in reading the 'Ways of Survival', Kim Nam-Woon was the only character that I couldn't sympathise with. If every person appearing in that novel was my hyung, my father, my dongsaeng, and my noona, then…

…Then, the character 'Kim Nam-Woon' was the cautionary tale for me.

"Your so-called justice had no dignity, and your killings were indiscriminate."

The 18-year-old boy adapted to this abnormal world faster than anyone else. He was the Incarnation who wielded his knife with reckless abandon and sheer arrogance, while throwing himself fully to the darkness.

Unhesitantly carrying out acts of evil, while spewing out one corny line after another.

Such traits were so vividly drawn out and my younger self could unabashedly hate this guy as a result.

「The evil fashioned just so that one could hate and detest it without holding back.」

That was Kim Nam-Woon.

"You are a villain. It's the same story back then and even now."

I muttered out as if I was talking to myself. Fables staining the blade dripped down like blood.

「Kim Dok-Ja, now an adult, was looking at Kim Nam-Woon once more.」

Just like how the characters from the 'Ways of Survival' changed inside the scenarios, the person reading that story, me, also changed too.

I was now old enough to figure out why he had to become a villain.

「Perhaps it was Kim Dok-Ja's fault that Kim Nam-Woon had to become a villain.」

…Because, I read the 'Ways of Survival' back then.

Because, I offered my opinions to the author, and just like how Constellations would do, I evaluated and judged him.

- Dear Author-nim, does Kim Nam-Woon have to become the comrade again this time?

Because, I believed that he was merely a 'character' the author had

created, not a living, breathing person.

When I thought about it, the reason why I hated Kim Nam-Woon was pretty simple in nature.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok always took you in as his comrade."

Out of everyone from the 'Ways of Survival', Kim Nam-Woon most closely resembled me.

"Even though he knew that you are an evil bastard, even though he knew that you did evil things… Even then, he took you in."

If I was him, how would I have turned out?

Cheongil High School second-year Kim Nam-Woon.

A regular high school student living under the stress of the studying and at odds with his parents.

What would happen if such a high schooler was thrust all alone in an extreme environment where he couldn't survive without taking the life of another, and no one was there to protect him?

"At first, I thought that Yu Jung-Hyeok was thinking of practical benefits. Because, you as an Incarnation held a high potential, that's why. But when I thought some more about it, there were other people with just as much potential as you. Even then, Yu Jung-Hyeok always accepted you as his comrade every single regression turn."

If it was me, would I have been able to make a different choice?

While repeating the 1st turn, the 2nd, then the 3rd… then even the 999th, would I have survived by making a different choice than the 'Kim Nam-Woon' from that time?

"…When I think about it again now, maybe it was not Yu Jung-Hyeok

chasing after practical benefits, but me."

From when I started reading the 'Ways of Survival', Yu Jung-Hyeok's age remained '28'

years old. He was an adult back then, and even now, too. Maybe he had already known the truth – that life was an accumulation of one's choices, that those countless choices piled up to eventually become a Fable worth a single person.

That no one was designed to be 'evil' from his birth.

Just as how the 1st turn was different from the 2nd, the 998th turn was also different from the 999th. And that might be the real reason why he repeated his regressions after all this time.

The blade stopped mid-air.

The [Unbreakable Faith] had faintly dug into the dazed Kim Nam-Woon's carotid artery and stopped right there.

I spoke in a half-sighing tone of voice. "That doesn't mean you can be forgiven for what you've done, though. What I wanted to say to you, though, was…"

[[Kim Nam-Woon!!]]

An incredible surge of Status rushed in from behind me. Someone was running towards this side like a tank while breaking past the vicious barrage of shelling.

It was the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye.

All because Kim Nam-Woon found himself in danger, she abandoned her 'island', broke past the shelling, and was hurriedly approaching here – even at the cost of her entire figure turning into tatters by facing 's attacks directly.

"You're blessed, aren't you. You even have a 'comrade' who worries about you to that extent."

The word 'comrade' caused Kim Nam-Woon's empty eyes to tremble.

It wasn't just Yi Ji-Hye rushing towards this place, either. I thought that my back was growing hot, which was followed by the threatening sensation encroaching upon the nape of my neck.

It was the [Flames of Retribution].

[[What are you scheming now?]]

The 999th turn's Uriel, who had been engaged in a battle against Yu Jung-Hyeok only a second ago, was standing right behind me even before I had noticed it. I slowly shifted my head towards her.

She must've escaped from the battle in a great hurry, because her pure-white wings were all torn to shreds, with deep wounds visible all over her figure. Just a casual glance told me that she was grievously injured.

She had disregarded all of her resentment and hatred, even her desire to win, and chose to fly over here all because of the danger to Kim Nam-Woon's life.

There were some things that wouldn't change even after becoming an Outer God.

Comrades willing to risk their lives for the sake of just 'one person' – because they were such people, they got to see the end of the 999th turn without Yu Jung-Hyeok's presence.

"My scheme, is it. That's what I want to ask you."

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Along with a soft landing noise, Yu Jung-Hyeok appeared behind the 999th turn's Uriel.

His [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] was aiming at her neck.

The emotions in his eyes were clearly complicated. His expressions seemed to be criticising me, but at the same time, also sympathising with my choice, too. Maybe it was both. His eyes seemed to imply that, now that things had turned out this way, I should do what I wanted here.

I was going to do that without someone giving me his permission, anyway.

"You and other 'Outer God Kings' could have easily destroyed Earth if you really wanted to."

My words caused the eyes of the 999th turn's Uriel to faintly tremble.

[The 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' is currently in progress!]

We weren't talking about any other scenario, but the 'Great Apocalypse' taking place within the 98th scenario. A scenario that not even the Constellations of the distant skies dared to participate in, out of fear of their complete, eternal destruction.

At a bare minimum, the descending 'Outer Gods' in this scenario wielded absolute power to easily scorn every single Constellation.

「With just a flick of one hand, every island on the Pacific Ocean was annihilated.」

I could still vividly remember that sentence from the original novel. These 'Kings'

could even summon an asteroid from the outer space and have it collide with the planet if they wanted to. They were existences that, after descending to this world as calamities, could drag in much larger Probability and use it at will.

"Why haven't you done that from the beginning?"

And all of my plans began from this very question: why didn't they try to destroy Earth right out of the gate, so to speak?

The 999th turn's Uriel didn't say anything for the longest time.

[[… That is…]]

Actually, I already had guessed what her reply would be.

Because, these people weren't the 'Outer Gods' that appeared in the original novel.

「Even if they were from another world-line, they were individuals who started from

'Earth' and managed to clear the scenarios.」

Earth was their home, the place where their Fable began, and where their lives had ended, too.

But they survived as tragedies. They lost their precious one to an Outer God from another world-line. Meaning, they were already sick and tired of this thing about the invasion of another world-line.

And so… Could such people bring about the destruction of an entire world-line just for the sake of their goals?

"You never had any intentions to truly kill us."

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye said this, that they would use this world-line as a sacrifice to revive their own scenarios.

However, was that the truth?

She was already full of mistrust towards , so could she really have believed in the promise with the Great Dokkaebis word-for-word and acted like this?

And would the 999th turn's Uriel really agree to go along with that?

"From the very beginning, all of you weren't capable of doing that. This fight was your loss from the very start."

That was the answer I had arrived at.

[The absolute majority of the Constellations are greatly shocked by

your judgement.]

The way to protect our regression turn without denying the 999th turn.

My confident declaration caused the 999th turn's Uriel to glare at me with complicated eyes. Yi Ji-Hye from the same turn staggered towards her side and quietly placed her

hand on Kim Nam-Woon's head.

He was staring at me dazedly, before shifting his head away.

Kim Nam-Woon was crying. He must've felt sad about something, because he was sobbing away uncontrollably. The 999th turn's Uriel couldn't do anything and simply watched this scene play on.

[[… Why don't we stop it here?]]

Yi Hyeon-Seong walking in closer voiced his opinion.

[[And what should we stop?]]

[[Uriel, you already know this too, don't you? This isn't what we want. We will solve nothing with this type of…]]

[[In that case, what should we do to 'solve' it, then?]]

Uriel's voice sounded flat – a voice filled with despair worn down by innumerable expanse of time.

[[I always gave it my all. As I promised, I saw to the end of the world. Even then, I couldn't save anyone. I became an Outer God, and carried on while dreaming of my vengeance. Even when I knew that my vengeance had no real point, I denied that fact and came this far. Yet, you are now telling me to give up on something else, having come this far? Speak, 'King of the Silverlight Heart'.]]

[[I don't know the answer to that. Just that, I believe the story of these people will show 'something' to us.]]

[['Something'? Are you saying that, even after we came this far, there is still something else left that we need to see?]]

[[I also do not know that. However, I have a certain feeling. This feeling that, the reason why we from the 999th turn became 'Outer Gods' and survived this long was all for this moment… Don't you feel that way, too?]]

The 999th Uriel looked up to the sky.

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The heavens were crying; stars up there were thoughtlessly blinking away.

[is urging for the conclusion of the Fable it had waited for the longest time.]

I looked around to discover our companions had already arrived here. Han Su-Yeong, Yu Sang-Ah, Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Ji-Hye, Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Gil-Yeong…

They encircled the 'Outer Gods' as if to surround them, and waited for my signal while remaining ready to take action at any second.

The 999th turn's Uriel asked out aloud. [[Why is it possible for these people, but not us?]]

The [Flames of the Retribution] burning viciously cried out, too.

[[… Why, why did we fail?]]

It was then, someone dared to open his mouth. "Why do you think that you have failed?"

It was Yu Jung-Hyeok.

He asked while his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] was still trained on Uriel's neck.

"Is the conclusion you didn't want to see a failure of an ending?"

Perhaps surprisingly, I knew exactly who those words belonged to.

「"Even if the end of this world is a tragedy… Do not think that you have all failed."」

That was what the 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok told his companions just before his death.

The 999th turn's Uriel shuddered. Among her boundless frustration, the faintest trace of joy leaked out. She walked closer to him while speaking in a trembling voice. [[Are you really… the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' that I know?]]

Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't reply to her.

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[[I wish to speak to him! Please, call him to the surface! Even if it's just once, I wish to meet him again. I want to ask him. And, I…]]

The 999th turn's Uriel held onto his hand as if to plead with him. By now, she too must've felt it – that inside this 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' was the 999th turn's version of him that she fell in love with.

Actually, I did ask the 'Secretive Plotter' to summon out the 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok while I was busy cooking up this plan earlier.

What these 'Outer God Kings' were relying on was that version of Yu Jung-Hyeok. So I thought that I might be able to persuade these people if I managed to get his help.

- I'm sorry, but that's impossible.

However, the 'Secretive Plotter' refused my request. Just like how the

current Yu Jung-Hyeok was saying his piece.

"What will you do after that guy has been summoned here?"

[[That is…]]

"If he tells you to surrender, will you do exactly that? If he tells you to listen to our demands, then are you going to follow his orders again?"

The complexion of the 999th turn's Uriel grew paler and paler with every word spoken. I wanted to tell him that was enough – too bad, he didn't stop there. His words poured out like merciless sword strikes. And from a certain point on, I realised something else.

What refused my request was neither 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' nor the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[999th turn's 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is keeping his silence.]

It was 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok himself who refused to show up. In that moment, a belated realisation washed over me.

"So much time has passed by already, yet you still can't decide on anything without his presence?"

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Only now did it feel like I could understand everything – like, on why he refused to heed my request.

Like, why the 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok chose not to appear before his companions.

「The 999th turn's story was completed through Yu Jung-Hyeok's absence.」

His companions lived on for the purposes of reviving him, to meet him again, and to avenge his death. They endured while using those goals as the reason for their lives.

「In that case, what would happen to their lives after their reason no longer existed?」

Foams created by the waves rolled over our feet. The great ocean was sinking. This sea seemed so unfamiliar, like foreigners drifting in from a very distant place. And in the centre of this ocean, the 'Outer Gods' forming an island held their breaths and stared at their kings.

And one of those Kings was saying her piece.

[[… So, that's how it was.]]

Like a ship that finally discovered its destination after roaming the endless, boundless ocean for an innumerable period of time…

[[So, that is what you wanted, Yu Jung-Hyeok.]]

The shuddering of the 999th turn's Uriel slowly came to a stop.

Fin.

Those were Uriel's last words to us. She didn't say anything else afterwards. And while not saying anything, the 'Outer God Kings' exchanged glances with each other.

I didn't miss that opening and spoke up. "We don't have any intentions to fight against you, just like how you don't truly wish to destroy this world. You are just as familiar with tragedies as I am. There is no need to create more sorrow in this world-line."

[The scenario has entered a temporary state of lull!]

[is surprised by the unexpected development of this scenario!]

I grew tense while observing their response. The 'Outer Gods' still didn't say anything.

I couldn't even tell whether they heard my words or not.

「So far, things had unfolded according to Kim Dok-Ja's plan.」

Using the 999th turn's memories, and arousing their memories of 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.

「From the beginning, it was impossible to win this fight with a frontal assault.」

If they got serious and activated the calamity's Probability with everything they had, then this scenario would've ended just as it started. Back in the original novel, there were a few planets that responded naively to their 'Great Apocalypse' and ended up getting destroyed, instead.

[A large number of Constellations that dislike you are dissatisfied with the current situation!]

[A portion of Constellations are opposing against the scenario's illogical development!]

The Constellations were probably anticipating a spectacle of their hated meeting a tragic end alongside Earth.

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Unfortunately, the 'Outer God Kings' didn't do that.

At least, not for now, anyway.

- Kim Dok-Ja, what's next?

Han Su-Yeong sidled up to my right and asked in a tense voice.

- To be honest, even I don't know.

- Wha??

- This is as far as my plan goes.

As if to imply her thoughts of 'What crap are you talking about', her face was dyed in the colours of pure astonishment.

- Hey, you. You can't be…

- Right now, we can only believe.

That must've come across as irresponsible. However, there was no other choice. This was the best plan I could come up with, and it also happened to be the only way to lead this event towards the correct conclusion.

I abruptly recalled what the 1863rd turn's Han Su-Yeong had told me.

「"I believe in the characters I've created. That's all."」

I could just about understand where she was coming from now. And that's why I replied like this.

- I thought that I can only believe in these people who were like teachers to me – these individuals that I had read about.

I trusted the 'Ways of Survival'. Not the author responsible, no, but the characters that appeared within its pages.

[The 'Living Flame' is looking at you.]

Uriel, more righteous than anyone else out there.

[The 'King of Silverlight Heart' is looking at you.]

The kind and honest Yi Hyeon-Seong.

[The 'Master of the Sunken Island' is looking at you.]

Yi Ji-Hye possessing a lot of affection.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok, who never knelt down in defeat no matter how unfair things became.

I believed in them. I believed in their histories that helped the young me grow.

I believed that their worth would never be tarnished no matter how much time had passed by.

The 999th turn's Uriel opened her mouth. Although, she wasn't talking to me. [[Yi Hyeon-Seong, you said that we might get to see the end in this world-line, the one we failed to see before.]]

[[That's correct, Uriel.]]

[[And your opinion hasn't changed even now?]]

Yi Hyeon-Seong nodded. Uriel then slowly turned her head towards me. Her irises were burning brightly just like the corona of the sun.

[[… Did you say you're the 'Demon King of Salvation'?]]

Against that gaze seemingly testing my righteousness, I subconsciously swallowed back my saliva and nodded my head.

[[Through this world-line's version of myself, I have seen the Fables related to you.]]

It was then Jeong Hui-Won standing nearby flinched a little. Technically, though, it wasn't her but probably Uriel, instead.

I was getting a somewhat-ominous vibe here.

What the 'Living Flame' said next was completely out of my expectations, though.

[[Your Fables were quite similar to those of 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's' that I'm familiar with.

From the way you cleared the scenarios to how you looked after your companions.]]

"…"

[[This world-line resembles ours quite closely.]]

The expression on the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye was rather complicated. I realised why they stood around looking at each other for such a long time the moment I saw her face.

They weren't agitated simply because this world just so happened to be their home planet.

[[Are you aware of the events that took place in our world-line?]]

I hesitated on what to say. This wasn't something that I could explain away easily.

Instead of my lacking communication skills, though, my Fables began speaking up in my stead.

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling.]

A portion of the Fables I possessed travelled towards the beings from the 999th turn via the tip of my hand.

[Fable, 'One Who Opposes the Miracle', has begun its storytelling.]

[Fable, 'One Who Hunted the King of Disasters', has begun its storytelling.]

I observed them reading my Fables. Diverse, colourful expressions filled their faces. It was quite clear what overlapped with my Fable while they were reading it.

…Did I also make such an expression while reading the 'Ways of

Survival' for the first time?

That was something I'd never find out.

[[… But, how could such a thing…]]

It was around then that an unexpected event occurred; the Status of the 999th turn's Uriel, reading my Fable silently until then, travelled over the Fable itself and invaded into the sea of my consciousness.

As if, she wanted to find out the origin of my existence.

[Exclusive skill, 'The 4th Wall', is activating!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Just as I expected, the 'Wall' made a move as the blinding sparks danced in the air.

['The 4th Wall' is glaring at the 'Living Flame'!]

The Living Flame's left hand was deflected away as if being rejected, a faint trace of burn marks visible on her skin. She looked at me in pure shock, then the faint hints of understanding began permeating in the lights of her eyes.

[[I see. So, that's how it was. You are…]] Her voice sounded even more surprised compared to when she was reading my memories. [[The last fragment of the 'Final Wall', is it… Is that why the 'Secretive Plotter' was so obsessed over you?]]

"Please make your decision. There isn't much time left until the scenario's end."

[The 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' has entered a temporary state of lull!]

[If the current situation persists, the distortion of the world will accelerate.]

Since they had descended as 'calamities', this scenario now had to have a conclusion without exception. The best method for everyone involved was for them to give up on being the 'calamities'.

The 'Living Flame' opened her lips again. [[I acknowledge the potential you possess.

Although vexing, I can even agree to forestall my vengeance. However…]]

Countless emotions brushed past her expression just then.

[[… However, I don't believe that you'll successfully reach the end of this world-line. I

don't believe that an existence that merely imitated another world-line's Fable can witness a proper conclusion.]]

"H-hang on a…"

[[You'll probably reach your 'Conclusion' when this scenario comes to an end.]]

The last part of 'One Single Fable', the Conclusion (結).

A gob-smacking heat storm began condensing with the 999th turn's Uriel as its centre.

Salty air circulated around my nose as the seawater evaporated into the rushing winds.

I reflexively cried out at this outrageous transformation of Status.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok!!"

At the same time, he stepped up before me and cut down the rushing hot air with his

[Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. However, the heat still managed to cook the backs of his hands.

His breathing became irregular. The [Disconnected Film Theory]'s effect had almost run its course.

Ku-gugugugu!

The 999th turn's Great Fables were activating simultaneously. For some reason, even the 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong didn't try to stop Uriel.

I urgently shouted out. "But why…! There's no need to do this! We-!!"

The 999th turn's Uriel wordlessly strode over to us. Companions grew tense and began unleashing their own Statuses.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The 'Living Flame' simply took a glance at our Fables and continued to approach us.

After every 'Outer God' handed over their Status to her, she raised her [Flames of

Retribution] up high.

I bit down hard on my lip.

[The absolute majority of the Constellations are scared of the 'Outer

God's' power.]

[Many Dokkaebis are repulsed by the Fable of the 'Outer God'.]

Everything within would soon become stories.

However, why was a story both the Constellations and Dokkaebis didn't want to see deemed necessary?

Just what was the reason for a story to exist in this world when it was only good for plunging everyone into endless sorrow?

[[Do you always seek to create a Fable to tell someone else?]]

The 999th turn's Uriel was talking to us.

The [Flames of Retribution] refined to the stunning degree was now talking about the time outside of the scenarios.

[[Who does it exist for, this Fable you have compiled so far?]]

While listening to her true voice, I realised what her intentions were.

A story nobody supported. Even then, she wished to see the end of this particular scenario.

「And that is the answer the 'Living Flame' had chosen.」

The reason why she wanted to continue on with this scenario wasn't because she agreed with the Constellations, nor did she want to side with .

[[Show me your 'Conclusion'. Prove it to me that your group can reach an end different from any other world-lines.]]

Stars in the skies were looking at us. Stars that had been watching this story for a very long time. I imagined those countless starlights, and then, end of all the worlds waiting

beyond that.

I imagined the end of this story, the one I'd been building up to for a long time.

"Kim Dok-Ja!"

The waves of heat completely filled up my view. The [Hellfire] of the 999th turn's Uriel, intermingling with the odour of burning sulphur, created the tsunami wave of lava. It was the moving wall of enormous Status capable of immediately melting everything that it touched.

The victory would be decided with one attack.

Block that, and we'd emerge as the victors.

"Focus your Great Fables, everyone!"

Petty tricks were rendered useless in the face of a calamity. My companions helped me with the mobilisation of the Great Fables, rather than focusing on their own specialities.

Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Gil-Yeong, and even Yu Sang-Ah, too – everyone raised their hands up in the air and added their share of the Great Fables.

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

Accompanying the noises of the heavens splitting apart, the roars of the Apocalypse Dragon could be heard. Right next second, yet another loud howl exploded out from Han Su-Yeong's direction.

Ku-oooooh!

The former candidate for the Apocalypse Dragon, the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'

was firing its Breath.

Jeong Hui-Won dashed forward while riding on the vicious storm of the [Black Flame].

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming on Aquarius', is unleashing her Status!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is unleashing her Status!]

Two Archangels were working together with Jeong Hui-Won. Her [Judge's Sword]

raised up high was now cutting down the tsunami wave.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

Was it because of the two Archangels' combined attack? For a moment there, the tsunami wave's movement grew sluggish.

Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't miss that opening.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is continuing with its storytelling!]

Traces of numerous regression turns branched out from his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. His Status spread out and began destroying the rushing wave.

- It's not enough.

Unfortunately, his desperate resistance couldn't last for long; the sparks dancing all over his body were getting fiercer and fiercer. The [Disconnected Film Theory]'s effect had finally run out, in other words.

The moment his Status began declining sharply, he let rip one powerful attack at the centre of the wave.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship(破天劍道).

Inner Mysteries(奧義).

Split the Dark Ocean(暗海斬).

A minute opening was created by the attack from his Inner Mysteries. I didn't miss that.

[Maknae-ya, preparations are complete.]

Also, the voice I had been waiting for entered my ears just then, too.

Surrounding clouds gathered around me as if to envelop me – somersault clouds, filled to the brim with cracking thunderbolts, completely encircled me. My body was buzzing as if every lightning found in the heavens had been hoovered up here.

[We can use this only once.]

I kicked off the clouds and dashed into the gap within the lava.

My wings generated through the 'Demon King Transformation' were lit on fire and it felt like my eyeballs were being cooked by this horrifying heat. However, I didn't stop.

I had a duty to protect this path my comrades opened up for me.

「The one single story that can stand as the testament to our lives.」

My feet moved faster and faster until they became streaks of light. I used the powers of [Lightning Transformation] to hold together my Incarnation Body threatening to explode at any second.

Faster and stronger, as if I had become a single streak of lightning.

Ku-rururururu!

The lightning charged fully in both of my hands boiled vigorously. This lightning, capable of smashing apart countless stars found in , the one that half-destroyed 's Heavenly Palace…

I used up every ounce of my strength to throw the Ruyi Jingu Bang.

「Stars in the skies boiled over, and Nebulas shrunk back. The thick dark clouds rolling in the heavens alluded to their despair.」

This single attack carried all the condensed power of the Great Sage

Heaven's Equal.

「Just like what he did during the final battle.」

The lightning bolt broke past the incoming lava and advanced forward.

Kwa-kwakwakwak!

The tsunami wave of lava exploded grandly and evaporated right there and then. The streaks of electricity branching out created a path above the splitting wave.

It was the path of the Fable we had been walking on. And I ran on it.

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[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is arranging your 'Conclusion'.]

The Demon World's 'Beginning/Gi(起)'.

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is proudly guiding you.]

Olympus's 'Development/Seung(承)'.

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is right by your side.]

The Great War of Saints and Demons' 'Climax/Jeon(轉)'. And then…

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is dreaming of the Final Fable.]

…The last dot that hadn't been filled yet.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

All the Fables we experienced together merged into one and emitted blinding rays of light. The explosion of light so bright that it seared my eyes, blanketed everything.

When I raised my head again, the volcanic ashes from the lava were scattering away in the air. The sky looked desolate after everything had come to an end. The dust blocking the gazes of the stars fell like snow and covered the ocean's surface.

Someone was plopped down on her butt in front of the [Unbreakable Faith].

I could see the broken wings of an Archangel. From the beginning, she wasn't planning to win against us. I quietly stared into her eyes.

I didn't know whether this was enough proof or not. Just that, this was the best I could show as the current me.

The 999th turn's Uriel stared at my blade for a long time. It was as if she was repeatedly mulling over the last line of text – as if this pointy tip of the blade was the full stop putting an end to all of her Fables.

Then, her gaze slowly shifted along towards where that tip of the blade was now pointing at.

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It was beyond the horizon where the distant sky and the ocean met.

「That's where the end of this world-line was.」

A faint trembling flickered past her expressions.

The 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Hyeon-Seong, and even the still-dazed Kim Nam-Woon were all staring in the same direction as her.

Beyond the falling grey ashes, something blurry could be seen.

Fear began clouding the expressions of the 'Outer Gods'.

I instantly realised what they were staring at. At the place where they arrived once before during the 999th turn. At the 'Final Wall' that could never be overcome if one insisted on living within this world of

'Fables'.

[Calamities of the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' are giving up on the positions of calamity.]

[The 'Great Apocalypse' is entering the termination sequence!]

[Your last 'Great Fable' is blossoming!]

[Absolute majority of the Constellations are witnessing the moment of your last Fable's awakening!]

I could now hear that 'Wall' calling out to me.

[Hidden Scenario – 'One Single Fable', has reached the 'Conclusion'!]

[is carefully considering the name of your last Fable.]

[You accomplished a feat that every star in will revere you for.]

[You have arrived at an epic that only an extremely few stars have ever reached!]

And finally, the message I had been waiting for the longest time could be heard next.

[You and your Nebula have earned the qualification to witness the '■■ of everything'.]

[The 'King of Stories' is summoning you.]

Fin.

Two days after the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario's conclusion.

During these two days, the 98th scenario meandering nowhere fast also ended, as well.

[98th scenario – 'Candidate Selection' has automatically ended.]

[No one has challenged your Nebula.]

[Number of victories: 1]

[Contents of your reward is currently being finalised.]

[Clearing of the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' has been linked to your reward, and the contents are still being discussed.]

Perhaps that was inevitable. While Nebulas were busy fighting each other, we actually were victorious in the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario'. We fought off the ancient 'Outer Gods' and protected Earth. Not only that, with only the strength of our Nebula alone, too.

[A large number of Constellations respect you and your Nebula.]

[Nebula 's fame is spreading far and wide in .]

[Every Constellation in the Final Scenario is now aware of your Nebula.]

[Every Constellation in the Final Scenario is curious of your 'Conclusion'.]

And now, everyone in this knew of us.

- Representative-nim! Representative Kim Dok-Ja! Please say something!

Voices from the megaphones came from outside the [Industrial Complex].

Whether it was the hologram panel or the regular TV – didn't matter where or what, our story dominated them all. Every broadcasting station, including terrestrial and cable, was showing the front yard of the [Industrial Complex] in real-time.

Also, the interview footages of the Complex's residents were being repeated ad nauseam, too.

- 'Judge of Apocalypse'-nim! Can you tell us the future plans of …

- Call me by my name when in public, please. Han Su-Yeong likes that stuff. I don't.

- Hey, Jeong Hui-Won. Wanna die?!

…I couldn't remember just how many times I had heard that "Wanna die" by now.

- The true influence behind the 'Kim Dok-Ja Company', 'Han Su-Yeong the Black Flame Demon Empress'. It is now revealed that, before the apocalypse, she was a famous author…

Reading the ticker proclaiming [Genius author's insight demolishes the Final Scenario!], I could seriously re-appreciate the fact that I had indeed reached this far.

-We heard that your representative-nim has become a 'Myth-grade Constellation' after defeating the 'Midday Sun'. Does that mean our South Korea now has a 'Myth-grade'

Constellation that can step up to the limelight?

- Incarnations are currently locked in a fierce debate after witnessing the footages of the battle's final moments. Just what are the true identities of the 'Outer Gods'?

- Why did representative Kim Dok-Ja-nim suddenly become a blonde?

The battles we fought were broadcast not only on , but throughout Earth as well – from Yu Jung-Hyeok kicking 'Ra's' butt, all the way to us fighting against the lava wave created by the 999th turn's Outer Gods.

[Constellation. 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is quite proud of herself.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is turning its nose up.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator's', lips are twitching.]

And every one of those scenes was accompanied by an interview with someone.

- You see, me? I recognised that friend's greatness even back when we were working in the same company. Ng? Just which new employee tries to be the first to go home as soon as time's up…

Department head Han Myeong-Oh? I definitely told him not to do any interviews, though?

He was smiling brightly, his left hand holding onto his daughter's. It seemed that he had managed to safely rescue his child.

- He was just a regular friend. Mm, well, you know, those types of kids? There's always someone like that in a class, that type of a person.

Now that some time had passed by, even a person claiming to be my school mate popped up. I began thinking that maybe some managed to survive until now.

…Those faces that I couldn't even place a name on.

- Kind, quiet, likes to read a book by himself…

Although not technically wrong, that explanation wasn't right, either.

Some words were quite convenient to use. And those words usually couldn't explain anything because of that convenience.

The school mate muttered on about the obvious stuff for a while, before excusing himself with a stutter as if he found the camera a bit too much. He probably ran out of things to say.

- About Earth's saviour, the 'Demon King of Salvation'.

Another program started after that with a piece of rather sad-sounding music. It was a specially-compiled documentary.

[Constellation. 'Goryeo's First Sword', is nodding his head.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is proud of you.]

While watching the footages, I began recalling the time before the apocalypse. The dreams I had, the things I thought were important, etc.

The fact that all these things came across as distant memories felt very alien to me. Of course, not everything was totally alien, though.

- He endured a painful youth stained by domestic violence, and…

Someone suddenly switched the TV off.

"Dok-Ja-ya."

My mother was standing by the entrance of the reception room.

I smiled nonchalantly while staring at her. "You're here."

She nodded as a bout of silence filled the room. I stared at the TV within this silence.

The darkened screen reflected both my mother and myself.

A faint aroma of perfume wafted past my nose, making me feel rather strange in the process. Once upon a time, she was the one person I just couldn't understand.

But now, I didn't even need to resort to [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] to figure out what she was thinking about.

"I'm fine, mother. Please don't worry."

A soft sigh could be heard next.

"I'm sorry, son."

"But, you haven't done anything."

"This time, it…"

"There's been a lot of interview requests, hasn't it?"

"They have been declined. There's no need for you to personally step up. You saving

this world or destroying it, it matters not to them."

The voices from the megaphones were still coming from afar.

I knew very well what my mother was worried about, and what she was apologising for.

"I'm not the 'Kim Dok-Ja' from back then."

I pulled the curtains back on the window, and the cameras pointing at the plaza all shifted towards in my direction.

In the past, I was scared of the cameras; scared of someone looking at me, and terrified of strangers yapping about me in strange languages.

"I'll do an interview."

“…Are you sure about this, son? How about giving it another thought…?"

"They also have the right to know, you see."

I switched the TV on again. I saw the news headline pop up on the upper part of the screen.

- What is 's goal?

- [Industrial Complex] hasn't revealed the Final Scenario's contents yet…

[A portion of Nebulas are focusing on your next course of action!]

[wishes to tell the story of your 'Conclusion'!]

[Great Dokkaebis are summoning you to the 'Final Scenario' location.]

[A portion of Nebulas wish to form an alliance with your…]

"At 8 o'clock tonight. Please contact both the Dokkaebis as well as the Constellations."

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Been a while, but I found and read the first version of the 'Ways of Survival'; the pure, unsullied version, before the author decided to alter it.

[Currently, both you and your Nebula have acquired the qualification of the 'Final Scenario'.]

[You can enter the 'Final Scenario' location at any time.]

The Final Scenario from the 'Ways of Survival' was actually a great

war against the

'Outer Gods'.

Yu Jung-Hyeok from the original cut the Outer God King's head off during that scenario and completed his own 'Conclusion' that way.

In a certain way, it was rather similar to the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' we had experienced already. Actually, if we were unsuccessful in our quest to stop the Great Apocalypse, then it'd probably go on to become the prelude to the Final Scenario, instead.

「The 'Outer Gods' that were supposed to become the Final Scenario's calamities have been sealed away.」

I looked at the three sealing spheres located in the middle of the [Factory]. That's where the 'Kings' that descended to this world was currently asleep. The 'Living Flame', the 'Master of the Sunken Island', and even the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss' –

all three of them.

The only one not sealed away was the 'King of the Silverlight Heart' who didn't appear as a calamity.

- We shall watch your Fable until its end.

The 999th turn's Uriel said that to me during the final moments before sealing herself and her comrades within the [Apocalypse Dragon Sealing Sphere]. She estimated that an incredible aftermath's storm would ravage them after they willingly went against the agreement with the Bureau and gave up on the positions of the calamities.

[You have concluded the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' in an abnormal manner.]

[A portion of Constellations are expressing their dissatisfaction at your manner of

progressing the scenario!]

[A portion of Great Dokkaebis hold inexplicable animosity towards you.]

[A small number of Great Dokkaebis acknowledge your achievement of convincing the

'Outer Gods'.]

[Currently, a number of the Wennys hold a favourable view of you.]

Countless messages continued to rise up in the air even now.

[Hidden scenario – 'One Single Fable's' completion is imminent.]

[A satisfactory 'Great Fable' has been completed due to the latter half of the 'Conclusion(

結)'.]

[is recommending possible names for your final Fable.]

[Please select the Great Fable's name.]

[Depending on your selection, your 'Conclusion' will be decided.]

I still hadn't picked a name from among the 's recommendations.

"Kim Dok-Ja."

Han Su-Yeong entered while pushing open the creaking door.

"How are our companions feeling?"

"About the same. Yu Jung-Hyeok's a bit injured, but it's not so bad. The [Life and Death Pill]'s effects are seriously no joke, you know."

She then proudly boasted that she got herself another pill – which wasn't like her –

before placing that very pill on my palm.

"Eat it if you think you're about to croak, okay?"

"If only you sounded nicer. I'd have been moved to tears."

Han Su-Yeong stared at my face with unreadable light in her eyes. This soft darkness was scattering away like a screen of fog between us.

A faint trace of light leaked out from the sealing sphere trapping the 999th turn's Uriel.

Han Su-Yeong's face glowed warmly under that light.

"I guess this really is the end."

I nodded my head.

"What was it like, back in the original? The Final Scenario, it… No, never mind. Things have changed completely from the original, anyway."

She was right.

We had already ended the war against the 'Outer Gods' that's supposed to be the original novel's Final Scenario. So, the 'Final Scenario' we were about to face should be very different from the original.

"What happens when you complete the 'Conclusion'?"

"Probably a meeting with the King of Stories."

"You mean, the Dokkaebi King?" asked Han Su-Yeong. She pondered something for a bit, then continued on. "Are you going to meet that guy?"

"I will. Not right away, but still."

"What do you mean? Don't make me worried here."

There was the sound of knocking, and a faint wind blew across us. One of the Complex's residents peeked his head through the open gap of the door Han Su-Yeong had left behind.

"Representative-nim? We have a guest, sir."

A guest?

[It's been a while, descendant.]

An old-fashioned tone of voice greeted me. An unexpected existence came to visit, as it turned out.

“…Pungbaek?"

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Heaven's wind god, 'Pungbaek'.

Only then did I remember what my mother told me earlier. She said that I should meet up with Pungbaek before I entered the 'Final Scenario', didn't she?

[Descendant, your choice was reckless. Letting the 'Outer Gods' live is no different than you embracing the calamity itself.]

…Did he show up here to spout more kkondae-like rubbish?

Pungbaek must've found my actions not to his liking, because he began a lengthy sermon at my expense. Such as, the young ones looking down on scenarios nowadays, us not being serious about the scenarios, etc, etc…

"Excuse me, grandpa?"

[I don't have the time to waste, so I shall get right to the point. Descendant, you might find yourself in great danger once you enter the Final Scenario.]

"Great danger?"

[I say this because I've been observing your methods for a very long

time.]

He spoke as if he knew just about everything I was planning to do in my future. Han Su-Yeong next to me cackled as if she was greatly amused by this. I shot her a glare and asked Pungbaek.

"Just what is it that you came here to tell me?"

[can lend you aid, descendant.]

I ended up frowning without realising it. I now could figure out why he was here. This dude, even until the end…

"I don't need it. You probably will demand some kind of nonsensical payment, anyw…"

[We don't need things like that. Witnessing the birth of a 'Myth-grade Constellation'

from the Korean Peninsula is more than enough for us.]

I couldn't help but doubt my own hearing just then.

[You'll find 's founding gods among the Myth-grade Constellations in the Final Scenario. If your situation turns for the worse, ask them for their aid. If you're genuine in your request, they should be compelled to make a move.]

"…Have you come here to tell me that?"

Pungbaek expressionlessly stroked his beard and replied. [Correct.]

"I'm a bit moved, actually."

Pungbake lightly coughed to clear his throat, then his body scattered away in winds.

[I've conveyed everything I wished to say. Let us meet again in the

Final Scenario.]

Less than a blink later, only the chilly wind remained there.

Han Su-Yeong piped up, sounding somewhat bemused. "He's really coy, isn't he? How adorable."

"Well, he was a good Constellation back in the original, so."

"I guess we do have some allies, then. Your life wasn't in vain, man."

I'd be happy if that was truly the case.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', says she's also here.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', argues that only the bad companions can be true comrades, and…]

[Constellation. 'Most Ancient Liberator', is…]

I looked up at the sky and smirked a little.

Han Su-Yeong spoke up. "You, you grinning that unlucky grin again. It's almost 8, so get ready. People are waiting for you."

I nodded before heading to the upper levels of the [Factory]. I could hear the murmurs coming from the interior. All manners of media houses, Dokkaebis, and Constellations were waiting for me.

Before I could make my entrance to the press conference venue, though, one of the Complex's residents stopped me.

"Excuse me, representative-nim. Preparations aren't finished yet."

…Now that I thought about it, since when did people of the [Industrial Complex] start calling me with that title?

Didn't they used to call me the 'Demon King' all this time?

"I ordered them to call you that. You being called Demon King-nim every single time kinda made me feel like we're this world's enemies or something."

"Well, sure, I guess… But, uh, Seol-Hwa-ssi, is this really necessary?"

Before I knew it, I was pushed down on a chair. And then, my lips began quivering from the sensation of a soft brush tickling my cheek.

The focused Yi Seol-Hwa replied seriously while painting my face. "You're supposed to be our representative, so we must ensure that you look presentable first."

"Your words hurt in a variety of ways, you know."

My companions were watching us from nearby as if they had found something quite entertaining. I felt like a monkey in a zoo.

Han Su-Yeong fidgeted around with my hair from behind and asked me. "By the way, will you remain as a blondie forever?"

"No, it's because of the Great Sage's Status seeping into me. I should go back to normal in a little while."

"Your hair is really soft, though."

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[Constellation. 'Most Ancient Liberator' says that his hair is the result of an extensive, arduous training regime…]

"It's finished."

Yi Seol-Hwa finished painting me in an instant and spoke while placing a mirror before me. Although it was a bit embarrassing to say this myself, a man handsome enough to ponder whether to slap Yu Jung-Hyeok's cheeks or not was staring back at me in the reflection.

I sneaked a glance to my side, but my companions weren't saying

anything. Several steps away, Yu Jung-Hyeok was glaring at me with eyes implying how unimpressed he was.

"Kim Dok-Ja."

I nodded, put my coat on, and placed the [Unbreakable Faith] on my hips. With the exception of the formal business suit underneath, this was my regular combat outfit, through and through.

"Let's go."

We entered the press conference venue. Countless stars and cameras were now looking at me in this wide-open outdoor venue.

Near-blinding rays came down from the spotlights above. My companions and I were being projected on a giant holographic panel.

Loud cheerings came from the residents of the Industrial Complex. What accompanied the outpouring of their cheering were the stories of those waiting for me.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are focusing their attention on your decision!]

[The absolute majority of Constellations are curious about the name of your final Fable!]

Those that worry about the safety of the Korean Peninsula, and Constellations that were curious about this planet's future.

Those who were scared of what lay waiting in the Final Scenario, and those who

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worried about their own survival.

Beings who were concerned about the power we possessed and were trying to take it away.

Those saying why we chose to appear only now, and the Incarnations pleading with us to take them to the 'Final Scenario'…

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is starting his story.]

As the countless questions flooded in, my Fable made a move. The skies wavered and the ground quaked – when the Status of a Myth-grade Constellation was unleashed, the entirety of the Peninsula seemed to sink into a pit of silence. Every single one waiting for my answer looked at me.

I slowly opened my lips.

[Everyone.]

And then, I began my story.

[I have no thoughts of saving you.]

Fin.

My declaration caused unrest among the crowd. Reporters ceaselessly snapped away with their cameras; lower- and mid-rank Dokkaebis reporting the situation on their own channels were now carrying astonished expressions on their faces.

[Many Constellations find your statement quite interesting!]

[Great Dokkaebis are closely listening to your statement.]

[Every Dokkaebi from the is focusing on your words and actions!]

- What do you mean by that?!

- Representative Kim Dok-Ja-nim!

It was truly something else to witness the Constellations, Incarnations, and even the Dokkaebis carrying the exact same expressions.

With a friendly little smile on my face, I opened my mouth once more. [It's exactly as I said. I simply can't see the reason to save you all.]

- Are you saying you will throw away Korea?

- In that case, what will happen to all the Incarnations that supported you until now?!

Support, was it?

[How did they support us, then?]

Agitation spread out in an instant. My quizzical tone of voice caused the reporters to shoot up from their seats and start yelling at me. As expected, the power of media seemed to be mighty enough to even oppose a Myth-grade Constellation's Status.

- Who do you think has been overlooking the 's tyranny?!

- Didn't everyone go along with your wishes until now?!

Overlooking the tyranny, was it…?

Before I could respond, though, Constellations chimed in first.

[A portion of Constellations are mocking the reporters' statements.]

[Korean Peninsula's ancient Constellations are in lamentation!]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is glaring at the descendants.]

Never mind whether it was a tyranny or not, I didn't even know what exactly they had been 'overlooking' so far. Wasn't there demonstrations against taking place every single day on the devastated Yeouido even now?

I quietly stared at the various shouting reporters, before asking them. [And what exactly were my wishes?]

- That is…!

[Have I ever asked any one of you to do something for me?]

Right there and then, the reporters shut their mouths and glanced at each other.

Dokkaebis were now forming expressions of genuine interest. To them, even things like this should prove to be an entertaining Fable. Well, it was an event of the 'Demon King of Salvation' forsaking his own land, after all.

What rescued the reporters falling into the pit of confusion was a group of Incarnations biding their time on the side of the [Industrial Complex].

- It's only natural for the one possessing great power to shoulder the responsibility.

And you are abandoning that responsibility right now.

An old man wearing a shabby hat suddenly stepped forward and said that out aloud.

Shady, cunning glare in his eyes could be seen beneath the crooked rim of his headgear.

I couldn't immediately remember who it was, but that line, it also appeared in the

'Ways of Survival'. I heard Yi Ji-Hye's voice coming from behind.

"What the hell. That geezer also showed up here?"

It seemed that the group belonged to the alliance down in Busan. The hidden movers that took over the alliance while we were away from the Peninsula had finally revealed themselves, in other words.

Behind them, the clearly-visible flags of the veteran's association waved by the ones wearing blue headbands. And then, alliance members from the countryside stood left and right of this group and angrily raised their voices.

- Demon King of Salvation, you must uphold the duty of the strong. Are you not the sole 'Myth-grade Constellation' active within the Korean Peninsula?

Some emphasized what my duty was, while…

- I beg of you, do not abandon the Korean Peninsula! If you behave like this, what will the poor citizens of this land do in turn??

…Some tried to appeal to my sympathy.

- Please, take us with you to the Final Scenario! Everyone who managed to survive until now has the right to be rewarded properly!

- No one among us wanted to become a part of the 'scenario'! Are you planning to abandon all these innocent people? Can you even claim to be this Peninsula's Constellation, then?!

In a certain way, they were right. No one among us wanted to be a part of the scenarios.

Not initially, anyway.

[I see that the various heads of the alliances are present as well. That's good.]

However, was the story still the same even now?

[I wanted to ask you all something. Just what exactly have you been doing until now, when the 'Final Scenario' is just around the corner?]

The alliance members all looked at each other when they heard me.

- We, we… protected the Peninsula while you were away…!

- Are you looking down on all the hard work the alliances have performed?! It was us

that protected our Peninsula during your absence!

I already knew what they had been doing, anyway. Meanwhile, I spotted a few alliance members exchanging glances with reporters.

「Publish the article – let everyone know that the 'Demon King of Salvation' is giving up on the Korean Peninsula.」

Most likely, they were inciting the mass media.

「The 'Demon King of Salvation', revealing his true colours of a demon king.」

I could imagine the headlines already without even asking them. I knew why they were willing to go this far, of course.

「No need to be scared. The Demon King of Salvation is still a human in the end. He's just another Korean, okay?」

「As long as he's born in this land, there are some things he can't go against.」

「Even if he now possesses great power and fame… 」

They still believed in the system. They believed in the story of 「democracy」 upheld by humanity for a long time, the Fables like 「rationalism」 and 「institution」, or even something like 「majority decision」.

[Ancient Fables are now looking at you.]

I could see it now; everyone believed they held a share in these Fables, but in reality, no one did. Even before arrived on Earth, this place had been under the rule of a Great Fable. And those believing in

this Great Fable were under the impression that they couldn't be wrong. The alliance members continued to shout.

- Didn't monopolise the scenarios from the very start?! What can we be expected to achieve under such unfair competitive conditions?!

[But, the Industrial Complex's door is always open to you? All the skills and Fables we acquired are all publicly available, aren't they?]

- No, but, because you people entered the scenarios first…!

[There are plenty of people from other countries who entered the scenarios belatedly.

Divisions led by Fei Hu or Ranvir Khan are home to many who have joined only a few months ago, but now find themselves in the latter half of the scenarios.]

- That's the story for other countries! Our situation isn't the same!

[They don't have the 'Industrial Complex'. Their support structure is focused on extremely few individuals, too. However, what is it like for Seoul?]

I snapped my fingers and Biyu created a panel in the empty air above. A shot of the

[Industrial Complex]'s interior was displayed on it.

[We publicly made available the methods to clear the lower-ranked scenarios, and even released the list of 'Great Fable scenarios' as well. And we didn't hold back with our support to those willing to diligently enter the scenarios, too. We didn't place any restrictions on sex, age, race – none of those. Because what we were looking for were brave people willing to fight alongside us.]

The panel now displayed Incarnations going through repeated harsh

training regimes, and my mother commanding them. The faces of both Jo Yeong-Ran and Yi Bok-Sun working as instructors could be seen next.

And so, they reached this far after going through hellish training and earned their own Fables.

[I'm talking about these people right before you.]

There were Incarnations possessing indomitable air and vigorous Statuses guarding the centre of the conference venue. They were none other than the 'wanderers' my mother had raised. The heroes that helped my mother stop the tsunami waves by the eastern shoreline were these very people.

[Is there anyone among you present today that received worse support than these people?]

No one replied. They were all overwhelmed by the fighting spirit emanating from the

'wanderers' right before their noses.

People faltering and biting their lips started shouting again.

- It's not like we kicked back and enjoyed ourselves all this time! We, we've been preparing for various things! Maintaining the systems and infrastructures, and getting ready to rebuild our nation once you finish the scenario and come back…

[But, why are you getting ready for that? Do you even know what kind of 'Conclusion'

is waiting at the end?]

- What??

[Why do you believe that this world's 'Conclusion' will be peaceful?]

This world had changed a lot from the one found in the 'Ways of Survival'. Yu Jung-Hyeok, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Yi Ji-Hye, Shin Yu-Seung – everyone had changed somewhat from what I used to remember.

However, some things didn't change.

「Everyone Yu Jung-Hyeok had met all wished for things to go back to how they were.」

Fluster was quickly dyeing the people's expressions. Expressions of being betrayed by that one hope they had been holding onto. I knew very well what they wanted, of course.

「However, there were none among them that truly desired for 'everything' to go back to how they were.」

What this crowd wanted wasn't peace for everyone, but for 'individuals'.

They had experienced hellish scenarios and managed to survive. And those who experienced such ordeals definitely didn't want to see everything go back to 'how it used to be'.

Because the hell they lived through had become a part of their stories now.

「… It'll be fine as long as the Final Scenario is over. I now possess power. At the bare minimum, I'm now in a position to act like a boss among the Incarnations.」

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「I can't go back to how it was. Just how hard did I struggle to get this far… 」

「If only the wasn't around… 」

As the countless desires seethed under the surface, I slowly turned my head and looked at the outer edges of the conference venue.

The alliance members, and certain folks standing even further away than the reporters, were looking up at this side. Ordinary Incarnations covered in dust and wearing shabby, dirty clothes and equipment were standing there.

Among them, I saw a young girl. She was only as tall as Shin Yu-Seung during the initial stages of the scenarios. She was so young that it must've been a miracle for her to survive this far. And while standing in that place that cameras and channels didn't even pay any attention to, she whispered to herself in a voice that only I could hear.

「Does that mean… we are all going to die?」

The cameras and their shutter flashes continued to go off, but I only stared at that girl for a long time.

And eventually, I opened my mouth.

[I'm not a hero. From the beginning, I never planned to save any of you, and I'm not planning on doing that in the future, as well. However…]

I slowly looked behind to find…

[…It's possible that the other 'representative' might be holding a different opinion than mine.]

…Yu Jung-Hyeok standing there.

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A little while later, me and Han Su-Yeong were listening to Yu Jung-Hyeok's speech from behind the stage.

- I also don't know what the Conclusion that guy had been thinking about is like.

However, even I too think about the world's Conclusion that I wish to see.

In normal times, the extent of his vocabulary would be limited to "I'll kill you Kim DokJa", but once he got going, he knew how to make a cool-sounding speech. He wasn't the protagonist for nothing, after all.

Han Su-Yeong wordlessly stared at me while sucking on a lemon candy.

I spoke as if to make an excuse. "It's not like I can step up to the front and command everyone forever, you know. Yu Jung-Hyeok suits such things better than me. Even back in the original, too."

She began grinning, so I added something else.

"We need a much more trusty pivotal figure. And that's not my role."

"But, you could do it, though?"

"It's time that we revert back to how things should be. I'm not a protagonist but a reader, remember?"

"Oh, my? Really? After coming this far?"

I hid my hands behind me and continued to clench and unfurl my fists. Indeed, even if this Kim Dok-Ja had become a Myth-grade Constellation, I was still 'Kim Dok-Ja' at the core. My palms were still soaked in sweat. Standing before the cameras was never an easy thing no matter the occasion.

"Is that the 'proper conclusion' you've been thinking about?"

"It's the beginning."

"What comes after this, then?"

I didn't answer her.

"Hey, you."

She strode closer, lifted herself up on the tiptoes, and grabbed hold of my collars.

"You haven't forgotten about the promise to read my novel, have you?"

"Huh?"

"We promised. You forgot?"

I looked into her blazing eyes, and finally recalled the conversation we had in the past.

Right, while exiting from the 'Kaixenix Archipelago', Han Su-Yeong did tell me that.

She said that she wanted to write a novel once all the scenarios had ended, and when the time came, she wanted me to read it.

"You were being serious back then?"

"You think I'll lie about something like that?!"

I could only grin wryly. "I've got a high standard, so will it be okay with you?"

"Oh, a dude with a high standard kept reading trash like Ways of Survival for ten years straight??"

"I might end up writing a bad review, though? Pointing out that it's got no probability, and say stuff like I'll be dropping this series in my comments, you know?"

"Go ahead. You'll see what happens next."

I quietly stared at Han Su-Yeong's face. She looked back at me with a serious face, not a hint of backing down visible on that expression. Right, she was originally like this, wasn't she?

“…I might end up nagging you for more chapter uploads."

"Not a problem. I've written ten chapters in a single day before, so it's fine."

My sense of reality seemed to weaken after I continued this tit-for-tat with her still holding my collars. The first time I met her, I never imagined that we'd end up as comrades like this. Han Su-Yeong who was once the 'king of the prophets'.

- Once upon a time, I discriminated between those that needed to survive and people whose death didn't mean anything.

We could hear Yu Jung-Hyeok's voice drifting in.

- I always believed that some had to die, while some needed to carry on. I believed that was a necessity for the sake of this world. But now, I…

Both Han Su-Yeong and I stopped yapping while listening to his speech. Here was Yu Jung-Hyeok's inner thoughts that he had never revealed to anyone directly. His inner side that even the 'Ways of Survival' failed to shed a light on could be heard now.

- But now, I'm not sure anymore.

The protagonist of the 'Ways of Survival' was speaking his heart.

Behind his back, the Fables of the regression turn we lived through flowed out.

He was the sole existence in this world who couldn't forget the previous world – the protagonist wounded and hurt by betrayals from the distant past.

- I received help from those I believed to be evil in my previous lives.

We could see Yu Jung-Hyeok battling against Asmodeus next.

He then met his end after a fierce battle during the 2nd regression turn.

- Then, I fought on the same battlefield with the one who betrayed me before.

Anna Croft, helping us fight off the Apocalypse Dragon.

Yu Jung-Hyeok stared at those Fables for a long time before continuing on.

- I haven't forgiven them. But that doesn't mean I wish to seek revenge on them during this lifetime. Because my life this time is not the one I had lived before. Just like how this world is no longer the world that you used to know.

People were listening to Yu Jung-Hyeok's story.

They were neither regressors nor protagonists. Even then, they all carried expressions of certain understanding.

- You surviving this far doesn't mean everything will be permitted to you. No, it simply means you now have more responsibility. The sin of living on, the sin of surviving by trampling on someone else's stories, the sin of using others' Fables as your fertiliser

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and daring to spread your branches and sprouting new buds – so, if you're alive, then be responsible for those sins.

Everyone that understood him, and even those who didn't, they all looked completely absorbed in his speech.

These were the words of a human who lived his life cutting down Constellations in the battlefields. He spoke neither the friendly words of consolation nor of encouragement, but without a doubt, he was still reaching them.

His voice sounded far more sincere than the true voice coming from a Constellation like myself.

- I can't make a promise of saving everyone. I merely try to survive the scenarios, and I certainly can't live through them instead of you. So, there is only one thing I can tell you right now.

This was undoubtedly where Yu Jung-Hyeok should be.

- Until the scenario for every one of you ends, I shall promise not to die or regress.

Fin.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's massive announcement caused the crowd to go silent.

The movers of the alliances, not won over by his speech, continued to exchange knowing glances with each other, but the crowd was no longer within their ability to control.

"Conquering King…”

Someone softly muttered. Soon after that, reporters began dreaming up of potential headlines all on their own.

「Conquering King Yu Jung-Hyeok, declares his desperate resistance!」

「's joint top representative Yu Jung-Hyeok, "won't give up on the scenario till the end."」

Incarnations who heard about him being a regressor seemed to be even more excited than ever before. Some shouted out loudly, and the [Industrial Complex] was immediately filled up with the roars of cheering.

"Conquering King Yu Jung-Hyeok!"

"Yu Jung-Hyeok!! Yu Jung-Hyeok!"

Everyone was now chanting his name.

Even those making snide remarks against earlier had been swept up in the flow and were staring at him now.

Things wouldn't suddenly improve with this, but at a bare minimum, the foundation had been laid today. The 'world after the scenarios' should now form with Yu Jung-Hyeok as its centre.

Even if I said the exact same things, I wouldn't receive a similar level of cheering.

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Probably.

Han Su-Yeong finally released my collars and while looking in Yu Jung-Hyeok's direction, opened her mouth. "If only he acts like that every day."

I agreed with her. However, that was his personality, so…

Now that it got going, the chanting showed no sign of stopping any time soon. The cheering that began with Yu Jung-Hyeok's name soon moved onto Jeong Hui-Won, then Yi Hyeon-Seong, and even over to Yi Ji-Hye.

And as every name except the 'Demon King of Salvation' was being chanted out, my companions shifted their gaze in my direction, looking clearly uncomfortable. I waved my hand at them to indicate

that it was alright. They deserved to be cheered on, anyway.

Eventually, the chanting reached Han Su-Yeong's name, too.

"Black Flame Demon Empress, Han Su-Yeong!!"

The crowd in the audience gallery was now searching for Han Su-Yeong hiding behind the stage.

I spoke to her. "It's your turn. Go ahead."

But she shook her head, instead. "I hate stuff like that."

"I thought you liked being the centre of attention? Was I wrong?"

"That's as a writer, not as Han Su-Yeong, you know."

While lightly tapping on the ground with her heel, she lowered her gaze and frowned a little. When she didn't show up, the chanting naturally shifted over to Shin Yu-Seung's name.

The companions waving their hands on the venue as seen beyond the curtains came across as famous movie stars in my eyes.

[Korean Peninsula's Constellations are proud of !]

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While watching them carry on, I spoke up as if to voice my thoughts. "Han Su-Yeong?"

"What is it?"

"If this world was a novel, which volume do you think we are in right now?"

She seemed to ponder this quandary for a bit before making her reply. "Not sure.

Depends on who wrote it, I guess."

But, of course.

Some might write a whole book out of what had happened during a single day, but some would condense everything that happened in 100 years into a single sentence.

Han Su-Yeong continued on. "If it was me, we should be past at least the 20th volume."

“…That's a lot."

"It should be. Lots of things happened, right?"

Indeed, lots. Without a doubt, it had been a long journey.

If it was twenty volumes-long, then just from the quantity alone, this book should be on the scale of a proper epic.

Dusk was settling in from the skies above the conference venue. Not sure why, but it felt as if the sun was setting much sooner than usual today.

Han Su-Yeong spoke as if she understood how I felt. "But then again, there are some people who can read all twenty volumes in one sitting, you see."

Suddenly, a corner of my chest grew cold.

I wanted to ask her – have I been reading every story that I found at a suitable pace?

Could I say that I've read the stories of everyone precious to me thoroughly and didn't miss a single thing?

"Kim Dok-Ja."

"What is it?"

"You may not be this world's protagonist nor a really cool side character."

"…"

"However, you have read it with all of your heart. I know that."

I didn't know what to say.

"And everyone you've read, they are standing there now."

Han Su-Yeong looked at the people by the press conference venue.

I too stared at them. Comrades I cared about were standing on a spot almost within reach, just beyond the curtains.

They existed beyond the curtains, alive and moving.

Yu Jung-Hyeok glaring at the crowd, Jeong Hui-Won grinning back at them, Yi Ji-Hye jumping up and down in fluster, Shin Yu-Seung waving her hand towards me…

Someone had written their stories. And I had read them.

Every story started off from there.

While waving my hand back at Shin Yu-Seung, I opened my mouth.

"Tomorrow morning, we leave for the Final Scenario's location."

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After the press conference came to an end, the companions gathered in the reception room.

Jeong Hui-Won massaged her shoulder while looking at the rebroadcast of the conference.

"Eii… Cameras just aren't my friends, it seems."

It wasn't just the Korean Peninsula, but the entire was set abuzz by the

's press conference.

- I have no thoughts of saving you.

Jeong Hui-Won tutted after watching Kim Dok-Ja and his bright face making that declaration within the display panel. "Seriously, though. He can't help himself with things people will hate him for."

"Still, doesn't he look more presentable now that his face has been fixed up properly?"

Yi Seol-Hwa, in charge of Kim Dok-Ja's make-up, nodded her head in satisfaction.

Yi Ji-Hye added something else. "Now that I think about it, doesn't Dok-Ja ahjussi's features come across a bit manlier now? I mean, he used to be on the paler side, and kinda felt like a piece of stretched dough, you know?"

"Uht? I was thinking the same, too."

A few among them nodded their heads in agreement.

For sure, Kim Dok-Ja of now had changed a lot compared to when they first met him.

It wasn't just the impression he gave off, either.

Jeong Hui-Won muttered as if she was recalling the distant past. "Honestly, I thought he was a bit of slick-tongued miser the first time I saw him."

Just how different was Kim Dok-Ja of the first scenario to that of a man about to face the Final Scenario?

While listening to others chat on, Jeong Hui-Won stared at Kim Dok-Ja's face in the screen – at his eyes, sparkling when he was reading the

prepared script, or the corners of his lips that moved mysteriously when he smirked.

Every little thing like that was serving as proof that he definitely exited in that place.

While feeling those expressions loom closer than before, Jeong Hui-Won began pondering Kim Dok-Ja's Fables. Could it be possible that the Fables they had created together was changing him just a little? If so, that would be nice. What if their story had changed him like how he had changed them?

"By the way, where is Dok-Ja-ssi?"

"I think he's making preparations for the Final Scenario."

"Wait, that ahjussi isn't cooking up yet another weird thing all by himself, right?"

Yi Ji-Hye's words caused a flitting shadow to cast over everyone's expression.

The person who lifted the mood up was the smiling Yu Sang-Ah hugging the two kids with both of her arms. "He promised not to do that, so let us believe in him."

Kim Dok-Ja inside the screen was busy saying something only to be subjected to a barrage of insults. Jeong Hui-Won watched that for a long time before placing her hand on the panel. She felt this lukewarm sensation.

“…Can I really trust him?"

She whispered in a really quiet voice, yet everyone present caught that. Even then, no one among the group looked at her strangely.

Shin Yu-Seung muttered out. "Ahjussi's skin looks so nice."

They thought that they had grown closer to him by now, yet Kim Dok-Ja's face seemed as distant as ever.

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Throughout the night, I had been thinking about the Final Scenario.

I read the excerpts taken from the 'Ways of Survival' that I found essential, and also spoke to Han Su-Yeong through [Midday Tryst] as well. It was to use her [Predictive Plagiarism] to predict what might happen to us in the future. When I thought that alone wasn't going to be enough, I exchanged opinions with the 'Secretive Plotter'

through Yu Jung-Hyeok.

Unfortunately, it was as if the Plotter was trying to be as obtuse as possible when it came to the matter of Conclusion.

[[The path you're about to walk on hasn't been trodden by anyone. Taking cues from other world-lines could become poison for the current you, instead.]]

Since I understood what he was saying here, I decided not to query him any further.

"What about Anna Croft?"

"She has withdrawn from the Peninsula along with 'Zarathustras' yesterday."

It'd been nice to get the help from her 'Precognition', but unfortunately, I seemed to have lost that chance.

Swiiiish!

The blade of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] scythed past the air. About a dozen or so steps away, Yu Jung-Hyeok was currently focused

on his training. He seemed to be swinging in the exact same pose as before, yet he treated every and each movement with care as if they contained profound meanings. Maybe it was possible for him to repeat all those lives because he was capable of doing something like that.

"Goddammit. What kind of a crappy development is this…"

Han Su-Yeong was also racking her brain trying to guess how the Final Scenario might unfold. However, even she seemed to be stuck, going nowhere fast.

Even if her [Predictive Plagiarism] was powerful, it wasn't truly omniscient. If that was the case, the 1863rd turn's Han Su-Yeong wouldn't have run into so much trouble.

I studied her for a little while before switching on my smartphone. Files appeared on the screen – from the original version of the 'Ways of Survival', to its final revised version.

- Three Ways to Survive a Ruined World (final revision).txt I quietly stared at that file for a long time, before turning the phone off. I didn't want to break the resolution I had been sticking to until now.

「Kim Dok Ja.」

I raised my head as [the 4th Wall] called out to me.

'What's up?'

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「Ha ving a ha rd ti me?」

I smirked a little at that unexpected line of text.

I had forgotten about this guy. The one who had stayed the longest with me so far was probably this 'wall', wasn't it?

'It's fine. I have you.'

It was all thanks to [The 4th Wall] that I managed to come this far.

If this guy didn't alleviate my mental shock during the first scenario, and if it didn't mitigate the physical pain I suffered during the countless life-threatening situations, then I'd have ended up as the wandering ghost of the scenarios a long time ago.

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut.

Sparks danced in the air reminiscent of a small child's figure excitedly quivering about.

For a very brief moment there, I thought I saw a triumphant face of a little kid above the dancing sparks.

「Eh hem, you wa nna see yo ur att rib ute win dow?」

This guy, does he think I want to see the attribute window every time I have a chance?

'Nah, it's fine. I don't need it right now.'

Seeing it might help me out. However, there was something else even more important than that right now.

'Actually, there's something I'm even more curious about.'

「Wh at is it?」

It was a question I should've asked a long time ago. However, since I couldn't get any straight answers to begin with, I ended up coming up with all sorts of theories by myself concerning this very question.

'Just why is the 'Final Wall' exactly?'

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[The 4th Wall] remained silent for a bit. I began thinking that it might try to change the topic or filtering might get thrown in my face here.

Just how long passed by like that?

「It's a wa ll wh ere every st ory is writt en on.」

…Was it because the 'Final Scenario' was literally around the corner?

Although the answer remained just as puzzling, it seemed that [The 4th Wall] didn't want to hide the information anymore. So, I asked again.

'Let me change the question. What are you exactly? And why do the fragments of the Wall exist?'

「Gu ard ing the pre cious themes, th at is the Wall's du ty.」

Suddenly, I thought of something. The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' Jang Ha-Yeong possessed – when I thought about it, it wasn't just her, was it?

The important individuals from the 'Ways of Survival' all possessed similar walls.

Sakyamuni possessed the 'Wall of Samsara', while Agares and Metatron possessed the

'Wall that Divides Good and Evil'.

「Be cau se, the re is more th an one theme.」

「A Fa ble is a col lec tion of ma ny sto ries.」

[The 4th Wall] was a fragment of the 'Final Wall'. And the 'fragment' meant that it could potentially be slotted back in its original position.

In that moment I felt clarity wash over me. If it was as I suspected – if this 'Wall' was the existence protecting the 'Fable', then…

Tsu-chuchuchu…

[The 4th Wall]'s figure seemed to waver before my eyes in the air. Then, a library filled with countless bookshelves seemed to glimmer beyond it. I reached out into the air, causing the texts from the books to scatter away.

What replaced them, though, was an incredibly ancient and worn-down wall. This

thing that reminded me of a prehistoric cave wall, was the 'First Wall'.

I extended my hand towards this wall that protected me from the cold, the pain, and from various trauma.

From ancient times, walls were created to protect something.

「You mu st pre pare the last Fa ble, Kim Dok Ja.」

And starting from an unknown era, humans began writing something on that wall.

That eventually became the Fable.

「You are its last.」

Fin.

"Are you all finished with your preparations?"

It was a regular morning like any other. The air was clean and fresh, and the complexion on the companions' faces wasn't gloomy, either. If it weren't for their current combat attire, I'd have totally believed that

we were on our way to a picnic from their expressions alone.

「And that's why Kim Dok-Ja was truly happy.」

"Preparations were done a while ago. Besides all that, it seems like you have something to say to us, Dok-Ja-ssi?"

When I snapped awake from my thoughts, I discovered Jeong Hui-Won pressing her face closer to me. As I momentarily remained at a loss with my lips bobbing a little, Yi Ji-Hye quickly butted in.

"I don't want to hear it, though. He's going to say some stuff about it's too dangerous so we don't have to go etc, etc, right?"

"Right. Since when was it not dangerous?"

"This time, it's serious! It'll really be dangerous~!…"

Yi Ji-Hye mildly raised her voice while mimicking my speech pattern.

Hang on a sec, since when did I ever speak like that…? I frowned deeply and opened my mouth. "No, that's not it. This time really is…"

"See? I knew it. Cough up the 100 Coins, eonni."

Jeong Hui-Won pushed the Coins to Yi Ji-Hye with a dejected face.

Han Su-Yeong watched this spectacle unfold and shook her head before addressing

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me. "You better start learning, man."

"Learn what?"

"You can only make your companions promise you the same thing so many times. If you persist with this, what will they start thinking next? Ah, this guy, he thinks our pledge is some kind of a joke. He sees every promise we made is a pack of lies!"

"That wasn't my intention at all. Everyone, I genuinely apologise if you misundersto…"

Having finished the hand-over of her 100 Coins to Yi Ji-Hye, Jeong Hui-Won suddenly asked a question. "By the way, what's our plan this time? It looked like you were thinking up of one with Su-Yeong yesterday?"

"There isn't one, actually."

Perhaps finding my answer suspicions, she pressed her head closer once more.

"Really?"

"It'll be different from how things had been so far. Even I don't know what will happen during the Final Scenario."

"That's weird. You aren't hiding anything, right?"

"No, not at all."

[Character 'Jeong Hui-Won' is activating 'Lie Detection Lv.5'!]

[Your statement has been confirmed as a lie.]

"Wowsers, you now even lie with a straight face?"

…Just when did she learn [Lie Detection]? Dammit.

I hastily made my excuse. "It's difficult to give you a detailed story right now. Things might change later if I tell you something, you see. Regardless of what the scenario is, please choose what you believe to be the right decision. If we succeed, we will be able to survive together."

"And that 'we' also includes you, Dok-Ja-ssi?"

I quietly stared at Yu Sang-Ah before nodding my head.

"Yes."

"And we can all live together in a big house with everyone?"

"That's correct."

"I haven't even graduated yet, so everyone will come to my graduation ceremony, right?"

"That's right."

"Hyung! In that case, can we go to a PC Bang…?!"

"We can."

[Character 'Jeong Hui-Won' is activating 'Lie Detection Lv.5'!]

[Your statement has been confirmed as truth.]

Only then the hints of relief brushed past their expressions.

I took a look at their faces one at a time – Yu Sang-Ah, Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Gil-Yeong, Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Seol-Hwa, Gong Pil-Du, Jang Ha-Yeong, Han Su-Yeong…

"If we're done here, let's get going."

…And even Yu Jung-Hyeok, too.

Different stories existed for each individual. The stories that I hadn't had the chance to finish reading yet.

"Let's get going, ahjussi! We haven't even entered the scenario yet, so there's no need to make the heroic determination and stuff now, right?"

I agreed with Yi Ji-Hye's opinion. The Final Scenario hadn't even begun yet. I slowly breathed in and out deeply, and raised my head to find a portal appearing on a spot high up in the air.

[Portal leading to '99th scenario' has been generated!]

Bihyung had created that portal.

"Let's go."

We stepped through the portal. The surrounding view crumbled away in an instant, only to be resurrected just as quickly.

Behind us was the wide, expansive view of , while the front was dominated by the sight of Dokkaebis waiting for us.

"Uh? Didn't we come here before?"

Here was the 'Gate of Star Stream', the very last gateway that led to the final gate, and home to the , the headquarters of all Dokkaebis.

[, your entry qualification has been confirmed.]

“…It's a straight pass this time."

Dokkaebis didn't bother with any complicated procedures and let us pass without a fuss.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are watching your entry into the 'Final Scenario'!]

[Many Nebulas are envious of your collective achievements!]

I sensed the Constellations and Nebulas watching us from among the darkness of the universe.

[Constellations within the 'Final Scenario' are growing tense at 's entrance!]

[You and your Nebula have entered the Final Scenario's location!]

When I opened my eyes again, I was treated to the sight of the galaxy swirling around in a vortex. Countless stars were continuously circulating around while generating auroras.

They were Final Scenario's Constellations. Stars that had reached the 'Myth-grade' a long time ago, or those that were receiving the graces of such beings.

However, rather than approaching us, those stars remained circulating on the skies high above an ancient castle.

"Isn't that…"

And beyond the massive, ancient castle where the stars were dancing around, was a wall so vast that we couldn't even see its ends.

"Is that the 'Final Wall'?"

I quietly stared at that wall.

It was as if that wall spread out within the entire landscape to arrogantly proclaim that this here was the end of this world-line.

「Everything within this world exists to be recorded on it.」

['King of Stories' is now looking at you.]

['King of Stories' has summoned you.]

I was greeted by this jolting sensation that caused all the hair on my body to stand up.

I could definitely sense it; a creature that moved the ginormous Fable called was waiting by the centre of that 'wall'.

My companions must've sensed it too, since they all looked tense.

Only Yu Jung-Hyeok maintained that preternaturally calm expression of his. "I don't see any Constellations."

It was as he said; although we could see the stars spinning around in the skies, not a single Constellation was walking around in their incarnated form. It was as if they knew we were coming so they had all run off to somewhere.

It was the Great Dokkaebis welcoming us, instead.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Heoche' is incarnating into the scenario!]

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[Great Dokkaebi 'Harong' is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Haram' is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Horong' is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Noksu' is incarnating into the scenario!]

When Dokkaebis possessing mighty Statuses appeared all at once, even I couldn't help but feel the oppressive weight from their combined aura.

[You've come, .]

The Great Dokkaebi Heoche, the dude who intruded upon the in order to recruit us, spoke up. He continued on with eyes of disdain squarely locked on us.

[You have all earned the qualifications of the 'Final Scenario'. Since there is no need to test you, it'll be fine to simply enter the 'Ark'. A detailed explanation will be provided afterwards.]

“…The Ark?"

Even before my question could end, a loud, visceral boom resounded out from the centre of the ancient castle. Its middle section opened up, and something began rising up from the castle's foundation.

「And it was a massive ship.」

The moment I saw that ship, deja vu brushed past my brain.

「It was the ship first seen during the Great War of Saints and Demons.」

Indeed, its shape was of the vessel that saved us during the . It looked uncannily similar to the 's Ark that evacuated us away from the fierce battle between the Apocalypse Dragon and the Indescribable Distance.

The only difference being, this one was much, much bigger and sturdier-looking than the Ark from that time. Its hull, seemingly carved out from the broken fragment of the wall, emitted both the contrasting white and dark rays of light.

Great Dokkaebi Heoche continued on as he looked at that hull.

[Originally, this world-line was earmarked as the 'Final World-line'. However, things started becoming distorted during the process, and the world-line's distortion is now well beyond salvageable. The Conclusion of this world can't unlock the 'Final Wall'.

Meaning, the epic tale that could satisfy the 'Most Ancient Dream' cannot be completed anymore.]

"What rubbish are you talking about??"

[You all shall become the 'seeds'.]

The seeds. I had heard of that term even back in the 'Ways of Survival'. A term that denoted all the candidates of the 'One Single Fable'.

Violent sparks intermittently exploded in the distant darkness of the universe; they were ominous noises that seemed to imply the end of the distorted world-line.

A portion of stars got sucked into those deafening booms and were scattered away in flames before falling to the ground as shooting stars.

The Dokkaebi continued on while looking at the falling stars.

[Think of it as a great honour. It was the will of the 'King of Stories'

that you were chosen as the 'seeds' when you are responsible for ruining this world-line. You shall ride on the 'Ark' and move onto a new world-line. And you shall be reborn as the core

'Fable' that will become the next worldview. Just like how those crossing over from the previous world have done.]

Only then did the things he was saying make sense. Basically, he was telling us to escape from this world.

"You… Are you really going to give up on this world that easily? You want to abandon this world-line and leave with everyone here? You think such a suggestion even makes sense???"

[Surely, there's no need to be that surprised? It shouldn't be such a bad suggestion for you people, too. Your goal is to reach the conclusion where 'no one has been sacrificed', isn't it?]

For a moment there, I became speechless.

[You have succeeded, 'Demon King of Salvation'. You and your companions can now leave this world-line and survive together.]

Explosion noises, mixed in with cracking thunderclaps, reverberated from the other side of the distant sky. It was the noise of the Probability the had been protecting crumbling away.

As I heard those noises, I belatedly began to understand several things.

Such as, why there were no Constellations to be seen nearby; or, how could the

possess such a powerful influence even from the very start of the worlds.

“…Just how many times have you been repeating this?"

[Is that really important?]

"What happens to those who can't ride on the Ark? Those who didn't get selected –

what will happen to them?"

[You probably have guessed it already without asking us.]

Heoche used his chin to point behind us. That's where the [Turtle Dragon] Yi Ji-Hye had summoned earlier just in case was. And on top of that ship's deck, four sealing spheres emitting sparkling light could be seen – the Outer Gods, including the

'Secretive Plotter'.

I stared at the characters from the original novel, currently sleeping within the spheres. Those that got excluded by the scenarios would either die or become Outer Gods, instead.

[New Main Scenario has arrived!]

+

Type: Main

Difficulty: ??

Clear condition: Enter the 'Ark' together with the comrades from your Nebula.

Time limit: 2 hours

Reward: You can cross over to a different world-line by riding on the 'Ark'. Your 'Fable'

will start anew in that place, and the Fables you have compiled so far will be recorded on 's 'Final Wall' to be passed down for all eternity.

Failure: You will remain in the world being destroyed and die.

+

Fin.

Companions all looked dumbfounded after confirming the scenario's details. It was such an incredibly simple clear condition. As a matter of fact, it had to be the easiest out of all the scenarios we experienced so far.

All we had to do was follow the Great Dokkaebi's words and climb aboard the Ark and then, leave this world-line.

"Dok-Ja-ssi…"

[What are you waiting for? There can't be a better scenario than this one for you.]

I heard the voices of the Great Dokkaebis floating in the air.

[Know that many Constellations opposed you lot being chosen as the 'seeds'. We chose you even if we had to go against the flow of those stars.]

Bihyung, his lips pale-blue, was lowering his head amongst his peers.

My head became complicated. Why did the 'King of Stories' suddenly suggest such a scenario? The me currently couldn't figure it out.

One thing's for sure, though – by listening to their suggestion, the survival of my comrades would be guaranteed.

「's Fable would be recorded on the 'Final Wall'. Along with all the other Fables he hated.」

I turned around to find my companions staring at me.

"Everyone."

I tried to say something, but it wasn't easy.

A truly easy path was now available before eyes. If we choose this method, then we might not even need to resort to our plan.

None of my companions would die, too. And they wouldn't become 'Outer Gods', as well.

We simply had to get on that ship and cross over to another world-line, and then, live our new stories as if nothing had ever happened. We just had to become the rulers of the new world-line with our Fables.

Just like the top gods of and , we'd simply live on while enjoying all the pleasures the scenario offered in sheer comfort.

"Dok-Ja-ssi."

My gaze met Yu Sang-Ah's as she looked squarely at me.

「However, would we be able to happily live in a big house in that place?」

Yi Ji-Hye was grasping the key ring attached to [Twin Dragon Sword] tightly, and…

「Would we be able to congratulate Ji-Hye's graduation with genuine

smiles?」

…Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong were holding onto the ends of each other's clothes.

「Would I be able to go to a PC Bang with Gil-Yeong-ee and play games with him, and…」

「And, go to the Han River with Yu-Seung-ee and share a pizza with her?」

Finally, Yu Jung-Hyeok was glaring at me.

「Just like erasing the graffiti scribbled on the Final Wall, could we really pretend that everything that happened to us meant nothing at all?」

The apocalypse had begun, and that couldn't be turned back.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is waiting for your decision.]

Just like how the dead pair of Agares and Metatron couldn't come back.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is observing your decision.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is observing your decision.]

We couldn't erase the Apocalypse Dragon's second coming as if it had never happened, and just like how we couldn't change Yu Jung-Hyeok's past regression turns…

「Everything that happened in this world was already a part of us.」

Han Su-Yeong opened her mouth. "Kim Dok-Ja, what are you

hesitating for? You already know what needs to be done, don't you?"

Yi Hyeon-Seong approached me even before I realised it and placed his hand on my shoulder. As if he knew what I was about to say.

"My thoughts are the same as you, Dok-Ja-ssi."

The Fables we've earned together, and the things that might get left behind, were all telling our story.

People back on Earth. My mother and the 'wanderers'. Those who shared the story with us, but not here with us right now.

[Every Fable of the Nebula is now looking at you.]

['The 4th Wall' is strongly vibrating!]

Some time ago, the 'Secretive Plotter' said to me this:

[[When we meet again, I hope you've become the proper master of that 'wall'.]]

Jang Ha-Yeong possessed the 'Wall of Impossible Communication', while Yu Sang-Ah possessed the 'Wall of Samsara' she inherited from Sakyamuni. Agares and Metatron possessed the 'Wall that Divides Good and Evil'.

And all these 'walls' each possessed a Fable that would be written on that particular wall.

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.

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「In that case, what is the Fable that should be written on [The 4th Wall]?」

[The 4th Wall] said this to me earlier – that I was the 'last' of that 'Final Wall'.

「The finale of all these Fables.」

For the last time, I looked at my companions before I spoke my piece. I was trying to confirm whether we were making the wrong choice or not.

I couldn't tell. There was no sure-fire way to figure out the truth. However…

「Do what you believe is the best, Dok-Ja-ssi.」

「Ahjussi, we'll die together when the time comes. Got that?」

「Rather than the shameful survival, I much prefer the righteous end, actually.」

Their voices gave me courage.

The Fable boiling up from the deepest part of my body permitted my true voice to come out.

[We shall not be boarding the Ark.]

It felt as if I could just about see the full stop to a story I had been pondering for the longest time.

The Great Dokkaebis were staring at me with frozen expressions. Every Constellation within this world-line was focusing their gazes only on me.

As I felt each and every one of those gazes, this indescribable sense of freedom washed over me, too.

「And at that moment, Kim Dok-Ja realised what the story not written yet in the 'Ways of Survival' was.」

I had read every regression turn found in the 'Ways of Survival'. I still remembered them all. However, there was one part that even I had failed to read.

「The Epilogue.」

From the 0th turn to the 1863rd. Every Fable that I read was now gathering in one spot.

The stories from the nebulas flowing within the heavens were being integrated into this world-line. I sensed the Constellations in the distance making their moves behind the scenes, too.

Something was approaching here.

[Do you understand the brevity of what you just said?]

The Great Dokkaebis were asking me.

Some carried expressions implying that they already expected this outcome, while some looked quite flustered, instead. Actually, neither should matter to them – after all, everything was simply 'Fable' to these creatures.

Everything was the will of to them, after all.

[is proposing the names for your final Great Fable.]

[You can now choose between two proposed 'Conclusions'.]

+

1. Vagabond of the Destroyed World-line

2. Ruler of the Despairing Starlight

…

+

The names of the last 'Great Fable' we had completed floated up. I stared at the choices of 'Conclusion' given to me. Both of them sounded rather grandiose.

「And both of them couldn't contain their story in its entirety.」

[I won't be accepting the Fable names you have proposed.]

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', has rejected all the choices proposed by

.]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[I shall not be completing the 'Conclusion' you're talking about.]

I slowly unsheathed the [Unbreakable Faith] from my waist. Most likely, this moment in time had been set in stone as soon as I first grasped this sword.

[Every Fable of the Nebula, has begun their storytelling!]

Yu Jung-Hyeok unsheathed the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], while Han Su-Yeong undid the bandages off her left hand.

Jeong Hui-Won raised her [Judge's Sword], followed up by Yi Ji-Hye grasping the [Twin Dragon Sword] with both of her hands.

Yu Sang-Ah spread out her lotus pedestal, and Shin Yu-Seung's Chimera Dragon began roaring on.

Gong Pil-Du installed the [Armed Fortress] faster than anyone, and I spotted Jang Ha-Yeong standing at the very top of this fortress while releasing the Status of a Transcender.

And finally, Yi Hyeon-Seong stepped forward as if to protect everyone.

They were speaking through their actions. That's why I could tell my story as well.

[I shall not let any one of you abandon this world-line. Properly witness the end of the story you have created. Witness with your own eyes… what kind of an end awaits for the world of your creation.]

The Status of the Fable exploding forth from my entire body travelled on the

[Unbreakable Faith] and extended forward.

[Stop this!]

The startled Great Dokkaebis also made a move and withstood my Status. I unhesitantly shot out the second, then the third, shockwaves from the Fables.

[is responding to your group's action!]

[is activating the Probability!]

Even as the vicious storm of sparks tightened around my body, I didn't step back. All the Fables we had created together were roaring on under the pain akin to our Incarnation Bodies being torn apart.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

[Your Great Fable without a name has begun its storytelling!]

What determined a story's 'Conclusion' were the Beginning, the Development, and finally, the Climax that had come before it. Nothing else besides could determine what the 'Conclusion' would be like.

I swung my fist towards the sparks before me over and over again. I even threw the

[Unbreakable Faith] into the ripples of the blinding aftermath's storm.

[Your action has caused to…]

[The possibility of the predetermined 'Conclusion' is…]

[■?■■… ■?■■?]

The predetermined texts were shattering right before my eyes. The once-legible words were changing to something illegible as if cloudy dust had settled down on them.

And when that dust eventually cleared, what I saw next was the utterly wrecked front hull of the Ark.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

I was aware of what would happen by doing something like this.

['King of Stories' is now looking at you.]

[The Wenny King is greatly pleased by your action.]

Even then, this was the best answer I could come up with.

「The method of finding the 'Conclusion' not seen before in the original.」

「The method of saving everyone while resolving the distorted Probability.」

Reaching the end of this world through the predetermined 'gi-seung-jeon-gyeol' was impossible. Because it was simply the template for the predetermined 'Conclusion'.

Meaning, this story wouldn't be able to cross the 'Final Wall'.

「And that is why Kim Dok-Ja refused the 'Conclusion' handed out to him.」

A giant rupture was being generated in the world.

[Your actions have crumbled the predetermined rules of the 'scenario'.]

[A portion of 's plot is crumbling away!]

['s emergency sequence is activating!]

The surrounding view suddenly began changing. I sensed the trying its best to shoe-horn me into its own 'Conclusion'.

「In the end, everything will become a scenario.」

Maybe, the Great Dokkaebis didn't know. Or, maybe they did know, yet had no choice but to simply carry on. Within this great 'scenario', even the storytellers would form a part of the scenario itself.

[happily accepts your actions.]

['s Final Fable is waking up!]

Just like how a scenario happening outside of scenarios would still remain a scenario in the end; however, if everything would end as a scenario anyway, then I should be the one to decide which scenario to live in.

So… take a good look.

[Main scenario has been updated!]

“…Dok-Ja-ssi!"

Comrades standing in my near vicinity all stared at me with dazed eyes.

My Incarnation Body was changing along with tingling sensation. And also, the ominous aura of exclusion rose up above my body, too.

I knew exactly what sort of a scenario this was.

[Mak-nae-ya.]

The landscape of war spread out before our eyes.

And opposite us, Constellations were being summoned. Our enemies, and comrades we once fought together, they were all there.

Anna Croft, China's Fei Hu, India's Ranvir Khan, Japanese Alliance's Asuka Ren,

and , and other Constellations from not just but other large Nebulas were all incarnating under the 's Probability.

「Every Constellation of was gathering here.」

Stars that kept amassing were burning brightly enough to illuminate the entirety of the universe. They were illuminating me as if they'd not permit even a single speck of darkness to exist in the cosmos.

「This was the 's final battlefield.」

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

This was none other than the 'stage' the 1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok had fought on –

the place where he had faced off against the seething Outer Gods and their 'Outer God Kings'.

If there was one thing different from back then and now…

The enemy to be fought this time wasn't the 'Outer God King'.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…!]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is…!]

Indirect messages flooded in among the blinking stars.

I heard Uriel and Black Flame Dragon's true voices, as well as my companions calling out to me.

The sensation of chaos completely filling up my view caused dizziness to nearly overtake me. I blocked my ringing, deafened ears while slowly blinking my eyes.

[Main scenario has been updated!]

+

Type: Main

Difficulty: Indeterminable?■

■?■?■?!■?■?■■■■■■…

+

The scenario message was being restructured in real-time.

Although its content couldn't be seen, everyone instinctively knew.

They knew that, if this scenario ended in failure, the would be destroyed.

A short while later, the 'clear condition' everyone's been waiting for finally showed up.

For some reason, I couldn't help but recall a certain sentence from the 'Ways of Survival' when I read the condition slowly rising up before my eyes.

「There are three ways of surviving a destroyed world.」

Comrades were shouting something while looking at me.

The author of the Ways of Survival did say this – there were three ways of surviving this horrible world. Three ways.

I began thinking.

「Three ways didn't mean that only three people would survive in the end.」

I looked back at my companions and grinned brightly.

*

Clear condition: You must kill the 'Enemy of the Story', Outer God King Kim Dok-Ja.

+

Finally, this world's epilogue had begun.

Fin.

"I'm a writer."

Not too long after her novel got published, Han Su-Yeong began introducing herself like that.

It was the same story during the blind dates she begrudgingly attended after her friend pleaded her to go.

"Ah! You're a writer!"

Her date must've heard about it before showing up here, so what was up with this fuss? The man quickly rolled his eyes around a little before asking her with a smile.

"Did you start your career through something like the annual literary contest in spring?"

"No."

"Pardon? In that case…?"

"I write webnovels."

"Webnovels?"

The problem always came after this bit.

She spotted the man's eyes sneakily scanning her worn, cheap-looking T-shirt.

"Aha, so, like… It's that, isn't it? Internet novels? Those with a lot of emojis in them…?"

"Ah, yes~. Exactly like that."

"You know, there are lots of strange jobs to be found these days. Youtubers, internet authors…"

The man grinned and sipped the Americano resting right before himself. The watch attached to his wrist came from a pretty high-end brand.

…Hadn't she experienced a similar situation to this one plenty of times before?

"It's like everyone is trying to make easy money nowadays. Don't you

think so?" said the man.

"Is there anyone who'd want to make money the hard way deliberately?"

"I make about ₩100,000,000 a year, but it's just not easy. So, like, whenever I see those types of people, I can only sigh, you know? Trying to pilfer other people's money the easy way…"

He must've already forgotten that this was a blind date judging from the tone of his voice. With just a hint of anger in his eyes, his gaze shifted over to the car keys resting on the table. Looked like they belonged to a foreign brand, perhaps a bit too expensive considering his age.

While letting the man's words go straight out of one ear, Han Su-Yeong switched on her smartphone. Alerts for new comments were clogging her inbox.

- Dear author-nim, isn't this too sweet-potato-like?

- Hmm… The next chapter will start with a cider moment, right? If not, I'll be exiting right about now.

"People who never studied hard once when they were young, just stumbled into some random luck…" said the man.

Suddenly, it felt as if she could figure out why people read webnovels.

And she could also figure out why her friend introduced this sort of jerk-off to her, too.

Apparently, she'd find out once she got here, and now, she could clearly see what that friend of hers was thinking about when setting her up with this 'meeting'.

Now normally, she'd let this slide because it was just too bothersome, but…

"So, like… Were you listening?"

"Ah, yes, of course. Your annual salary was…?"

Only then did the man's eyes sparkle. His shoulders perked up as if he just knew she'd ask him about that subject again.

"It's ₩100,000,000 after tax."

"Hmm. It's similar to mine."

"Pardon?" The man smirked. "You're a writer, but your annual salary is

₩100,000,000?"

Han Su-Yeong shrugged her shoulders and pulled out her own car keys. It was the newest model from Porsche. More specifically, it was exactly three times more expensive than the man's own ride. Although, since she couldn't be bothered to, she rarely drove around in it.

The man's eyes shook in sync with the shaking keys. And an awkward smile floated up on his face next.

"Haha, but, uh… a writer's income is inconsistent so it can't really be called 'annual salary', am I right? I mean, your wage can't be fixed, right?"

The man's lips ceaselessly bobbed up and down to yap on about the cliched stuff. It was just about adequate enough to be used as some line muttered out by a throwaway villain during the next chapter or some such. In that case, the protagonist would reply like this.

"But, I never said it's the annual salary?"

"Pardon? Ah, in that case, is it what you amassed so far?"

"No, I made ₩100,000,000 for the first half of this month, and hmm… since there are two more weeks left in this month…"

"…Excuse me?"

Only then the man seemed to have realised something, because his expression had changed quite drastically.

In the end, this whole thing had unfolded in the way her friend wanted to. If this was a novel, it'd have been a cider moment, but in reality, she didn't feel all that good about it.

The man was now hurriedly sending messages to someone. He was probably asking her friend that set this blind date up all sorts of questions.

"Excuse me, can you tell me the name of the novel you wrote…?"

Just as she began thinking that she didn't want this guy to know the title, Han Su-Yeong's smartphone issued an alarm tone.

- Hello there, author-nim. I'm just a reader who enjoys reading webnovels. I coincidentally ran across your novel and got to read it…

She wondered what sort of a long-winded message this was. She then tapped on the message without thinking too much about it. The tone of it was polite but old-fashioned, and on top of that, she felt just a tiny hint of naivete, too.

- The novel you have written is far too similar to a novel that I really treasure, the

'Three Ways of Surviving a Destroyed World'.

…What the hell was up with this bastard??

「And that was Han Su-Yeong's first encounter with Kim Dok-Ja.」

Kim Dok-Ja.

「Han Su-Yeong watched the spectacle unfold before her eyes and ruminated on the memories of that time.」

She lost a portion of her memories while creating avatars and she couldn't clearly remember what happened back then. What was certain, though, was that she had indeed read the novel called the

'Ways of Survival'.

All because of a fool with a username Kim 'Dok-Ja', no less.

- Author-nim! It was also a very enjoyable read today as well.

Someone on the level of Han Su-Yeong could tell whether the novel would do well or

not after reading only a couple of chapters. However, in her eyes, this 'Ways of Survival'

would never make it even if the sky collapsed on itself.

- This, it's a really interesting beginning.

From the beginning, it was definitely dogshit.

- Author-nim, does this mean Yu Jung-Hyeok remembers all those things? Then, back in the 72th regression turn…

It was far too obsessed with lengthy expositions, and…

- Keuh, how unfortunate! I hope Jung-Hyeok-ee will get his act together in the next regression. Today was another honey jam of a work, too.

As for its protagonist, it was just a pretty boy devoid of personality that seemingly wasted all of his available skill points on his outer appearance. Not only that…

- Author-nim! Congratulations on reaching the 2000th chapter! Since you've come this far, how about another 1000 chapters…

Its chapter count was excessive, as well.

'…This is entertaining? Seriously? Is he a nutcase?"

She got royally irritated and began following after this fool's comments. She even clicked on 'downvote' too. Like a bewitched person, Han Su-Yeong read only Kim DokJa's comments and not the novel itself.

- Will Ji-Hye finally awaken next chapter?

- Author-nim! I've discovered a typo on page 7! With my lacking opinion, I think the spelling here should be… Ah, I looked into it and it's actually my mistake. My apologies.

I've learned something new today.

- Please, just smack that fool Jung-Hyeok-ee in the back of his head…

This guy, he never once missed writing a comment on all those thousands of chapters.

And every single one contained understanding and love for the world created by this author.

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「Han Su-Yeong was envious of that.」

She believed that there was simply no way anyone would be reading a novel as bad as this, that it had to be the author himself busy blowing his own trumpet. She thought that the author had created two separate IDs and wrote the novel with one while with the other one, wrote all those comments and uploaded recommendations, too.

- Isn't recommending one's own work prohibited?

「Just like how Yu Jung-Hyeok was an imagined character to Kim Dok-Ja, Kim Dok-Ja was exactly like that to Han Su-Yeong.」

She thought that such a person wouldn't be real, but…

That very person within the texts was standing right before Han Su-

Yeong's eyes.

"Dok-Ja-ssi!!"

A loud ringing in the ear rang out, accompanied by explosions going off in all directions.

Han Su-Yeong could see Kim Dok-Ja in the centre of the battlefield swirling like a thunderstorm, busy breaking past the intense outpourings from the stars.

Incarnations were screaming out while the stars were roaring loudly. And in the meantime, Dokkaebis in the sky were laughing.

[[■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■!!]]

Kim Dok-Ja was shouting out. However, Han Su-Yeong couldn't tell whether he was screaming, proclaiming, or even crying in sorrow. Now that he had been transformed into an Outer God, even his voice had been completely excluded from the scenarios.

Didn't matter what he said, the contents were deemed unimportant now.

Gyah-aaaaah!

However, there were more Outer Gods following him now. Vestiges cast away by the innumerable world-lines were now gathering near Kim Dok-Ja's side. And then, there were Myth-grade Constellations waiting for him above the skies of the scenario.

[So, it has finally begun.]

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The king of and the ruler of the 12 gods, the 'Lightning Throne', Zeus was there.

[This world-line's 'Final Scenario' has begun!]

[Every existence has acquired the scenario entry qualification for the Final Scenario!]

[Please kill the 'Enemy of the Story', Kim Dok-Ja.]

The scenario messages popped up soon afterwards. Everyone present understood the current situation. Zeus was the first to open his mouth.

[Sweep them away.]

Along with heaven-collapsing noises, arcs of lightning belonging to Zeus rained down.

With a 'pow!' noise of something exploding, blood splat onto Han Su-Yeong's cheek.

The Nameless Ones were dying as black blood spurted out from them.

[Sparemesparemesparemesparemespareme…]

Even the frightening 'Outer Gods' came across as mere water balloons in front of the combined Status emitted by the Myth-grade Constellations. The 'Outer Gods' vomited out discarded Fables as they exploded en masse.

Blindingly brilliant shower of lightning rained down. And in the centre of the devastated landscape, Kim Dok-Ja was enduring against Zeus's electrical attacks.

Why did he make that kind of a choice?

[Tear his wings off! Surround him from all sides!]

Along with the roars from the Constellations, a massive army rushed in. Incarnations and Constellations that had broken past the hellish scenarios to get this far, were flooding in, all of them united as one under the single goal of eliminating 'Kim Dok-Ja'.

The one to come to his aid was the Great Sage, now one soul and body with him.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is unveiling his Status!]

Another electrical arc haughtily flowed in the air. The Great Sage's own lightning

pushed away Zeus', and tore through the sky as if it was paper.

For a moment there, the Constellations' spirit seemed to wane, but a voice of encouragement resounded out next.

[It's the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal!]

[Do not back away! Kill him, and the scenario will end!]

[This is the Final Scenario of this world-line!]

This expectation that they would finally be freed from everything. Among them were faces of Constellations and Incarnations she had seen in passing before.

"No need to feel guilty here! He chose this for himself!"

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Constellations and Incarnations from those Nebulas she had heard of at least once before were all here now. Every one of them knew who Kim Dok-Ja was.

「Every single one of them raised their swords in order to kill Kim Dok-Ja.」

Through the torn black coat, the white coat underneath could be seen. Kim Dok-Ja taking on a role that didn't suit him was there.

The tattered Kim Dok-Ja with a demon king's horn, and his black and white wings spread open wide.

Kim Dok-Ja standing in front of the Outer Gods and swinging his sword towards the enemies.

She thought that her vision suddenly grew blurry, then Kim Dok-Ja's figure began

'erasing'.

The strange light in the eye unique to the cephalopod, and the exterior giving off the dark, damp impression; where Kim Dok-Ja used to stand was now dominated by a giant Outer God King that seemed to be a mixture of all the traits found in every monster of this world.

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「The Enemy of the Story.」

As a writer herself, Han Su-Yeong could instinctively tell. If this world was a novel, then Kim Dok-Ja was the 'final boss'. And this story would only end with the death of that

'Kim Dok-Ja'.

"Han Su-Yeong!"

Someone pulled her back. Almost right away, a rapid arc of electricity flew past in front of her nose.

"Step back! Hurry!"

It was Yu Sang-Ah. Only she seemed to have maintained her wits within this scene of pure anarchy and confusion. But, how could she?

"Everyone, you must regain yourselves! Dok-Ja-ssi is, right now…!"

Kim Dok-Ja would die at this rate.

"We made a promise with Dok-Ja-ssi! Have you all forgotten it?!"

Kim Dok-Ja was a liar.

"Dok-Ja-ssi really wouldn't do the same thing again…!"

Always believing in the goodness of a person – that was Yu Sang-Ah. And because she was like that, because she could believe in the others, she managed to be not shaken up by this situation. And that was

precisely why she always clashed with Han Su-Yeong until now.

Even with Yu Sang-Ah's shouts, the companions still carried empty expressions. With dazed eyes, they were each submerged in their own thoughts. The same question was grabbing hold of them.

「Why did Kim Dok-Ja make that kind of choice?」

But, they made a promise; he swore that he'd not sacrifice himself in this manner ever again.

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「Just why?」

"This story is not over yet."

Yu Sang-Ah was wrong, though. The direction of this story had been chosen already.

Kim Dok-Ja had become the 'Enemy of the Story', and this stinking scenario would end only when he was dead. The author responsible for writing this tragedy had chosen it that way.

…The author?

[[■■■■■■■■■!!]]

Kim Dok-Ja's voice sorrowfully reverberated out. That voice returned to her as memories from a certain moment in the past.

- Han Su-Yeong, you're a writer, right?

Her brain kicked into gear.

- What are you going to piss me off with this time?

- I wanted to ask you about something.

- What is it?

- Are writers truly omniscient within the stories they write?

- What's up with this totally out of the blue utterance?

- No, well, it's just that I'm kinda curious. While you were writing, were you in control of everything? Like, this person would act like this, and that person would behave in this way…

- That, obviously…

Han Su-Yeong oh-so-confidently made her declaration.

- Can't be controlled.

- Why not? Aren't you the author?

- You think an author is a real god or something?

- Doesn't the author create everything within a story? Situations, characters…

Han Su-Yeong muttered, you don't know anything, and carried on.

- All the characters would start acting on their own the moment they are created.

Authors simply provide them with stages, that's all. It's all up to the characters themselves on how they would respond to the situation and make their moves.

- Not as a figure of speech, but for real?

- Yeah, really.

- You know, that's a really lazy way to write, don't you agree?

- Wanna die?!

Kim Dok-Ja got bent in half when she punched him in the guts.

What was he thinking about back then?

- Interesting. Even an author isn't the god of the stories… In that case, just who determines the 'scenarios', then?

From the tip of her toes, this incredible chill crept up all over her body. Maybe, just maybe, Kim Dok-Ja over there right now was the answer to that exact question.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Perhaps, he was thinking about that one method to change the conclusion of this stubborn world of scenarios.

[Great Dokkaebis are panicking from the deluge of the Probability!]

[is paying attention at the course of the shaking Probability!]

'Scenario' wasn't perfect.

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['Final Scenario' is going through a rapid change!]

It was definitely the author who created the story. However, it was the characters that lived within that very story. And the one that determined their fate was…

[Korean Peninsula's Constellations are cheering on the 'Demon King of Salvation!]

['s Constellations are cheering on the 'Demon King of Salvation!]

['s Constellations are cheering on the 'Demon King of Salvation!]

[Constellations of planets with unknown names are cheering on the 'Demon King of Salvation'!]

[Countless Constellations are donating Coins!]

[The absolute majority of the Constellations are watching the 'Demon King of Salvation's' last battle!]

…The ones watching that story.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Many Constellations don't wish for the 'Demon King of Salvation's' death!]

The only beings that could change the 'scenarios'.

Kim Dok-Ja hadn't become the 'Enemy of the Story' to die. And he certainly didn't choose sacrifice in order to betray his companions, either.

「The 'Ways of Survival' was Yu Jung-Hyeok's story. In that case, whose story was this world?」

Han Su-Yeong watched the world's Probability shake unsteadily and bitterly muttered to herself. "… That's right. No reader would want to see the protagonist get killed."

Kim Dok-Ja's and 's influence had grown incredibly in this world. The proof of that was him becoming the subject of the Final Scenario.

Constellations, whether they liked it or not, all watched Kim Dok-Ja's Fable, and they

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either sympathised with it or were jealous of him. Every star in this world was watching his story regardless of whether he wanted it or not. And most likely, Kim Dok-Ja himself was aware of that.

Perhaps, he could've been thinking about it for a long time.

「This was the last gamble Kim Dok-Ja made after becoming the 'Character'.」

She sensed Kim Dok-Ja glancing in her direction from afar. As if to say, she should be able to understand since it was her. As if to say, she should be able to start a brand new story that no one knew from this moment on.

「He was sacrificing himself not to sacrifice himself.」

It could very much be an impossible task. The conclusion could be forever out of their reach. However, this was the only 'no one will be sacrificed' method Kim Dok-Ja could come up with.

So, the things Han Su-Yeong had to do now was pretty clear.

'That guy alone can't do it.'

Han Su-Yeong looked behind her. She needed to let her companions know what exactly Kim Dok-Ja wanted to achieve here.

Unfortunately, there was something that Han Su-Yeong, absorbed in her own attempt at understanding, failed to realise.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is predicting the character's mentality.]

And that was the fact that not everyone here was an author. Meaning, not everyone could see this situation in an objective manner like her.

Even before Han Su-Yeong could open her mouth, someone among the companions dashed forward first.

The clear-cut animosity was permeating within the unsheathed blade. Han Su-Yeong realised the direction this sword light was aimed at and cried out in pure shock.

"Wait!! Hold on!! That guy, he's trying to-!!"

She knew whose sword it was, and that's why she couldn't believe it.

「Right in this moment, this one person grew to deeply resent Kim Dok-Ja.」

The strongest sword of Kim Dok-Ja that had been protecting him for a very long time.

And that sword was making a move to end this scenario.

Fin.

[Your ■■ is ■■.]

When Jeong Hui-Won first heard that message, she felt a bit weirded out. She recalled what Kim Dok-Ja told her some time ago. He said that each individual had a specific ending reserved for them. So, she believed that she too would have something like that as well.

However… it was ■■?

Jeong Hui-Won knew someone that suited such description far better than her.

The person she fought alongside the closest than anyone.

The person she wouldn't hesitate to become a sword for.

The person who treated his comrades preciously. The person who always sacrificed himself first.

「That's why, a person she couldn't help but resent.」

Jeong Hui-Won broke past the waves of 'Nameless Ones' and ran. Venomous liquid exploded nearby and splashed onto her thigh, boiling her flesh dark. She urgently pulled out the internal healing salve Yi Seol-Hwa gave her earlier and applied it on the wound, then started running again. She shook off the Constellations trying to interfere with their outpouring of attacks, and leapt up by stepping on the Nameless Ones surrounding Kim Dok-Ja as if to protect him.

She could see 'something' far away. Something that used to be 'Kim Dok-Ja'.

[[■■■■■■!!]]

And now, the being that had become the 「Enemy of the Story」.

"Hui-Won-ssi!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong managed to get to her and grabbed her shoulders.

"Hold on-!"

Even before he could continue with his words, a message popped up first, instead.

[The Final Scenario's streaming to all locations will begin!]

Every channel within was now opening up.

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…!

The scenario message flickered about unstably.

[Everyone, don't panic and just focus on the scenario. This scenario will be the final one for you. Once you hunt down the Outer God King, your long journey will come to an end as well.]

[This story shall be recorded on the 'Final Wall', and the journeys of the stars will become the 'epic tale' that shall be handed down for all eternity!]

Great Dokkaebis greedily shouted out. Their eyes were burning with naked desire to record the Fable they had guided till here on the Final Wall.

[Great Fable, 'Brilliance of the Ancient Dawn', dreams of the final story!]

[Great Fable, 'Master of Asgard', dreams of the final story!]

Great Fables were writhing viciously now. To remain as the 'One Single Fable', these Great Fables were urging on the Constellations and Incarnations.

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Borders of the Oceans', is pulling out his weapon!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Abydos', is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Constellation, 'River Nile's Monster Bird', is roaring out viciously!]

However, not everyone was being led around by that urging.

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Despite the orders from the first-seat god Zeus, several gods from , including Dionysus, were hesitating to attack. It was the same story for the Incarnations, as well.

“…Do we really need to kill that person?"

The one to say that was the Japanese Incarnation, 'Asuka Ren'.

"The 'Kim Dok-Ja' I met was not a villain."

"She's right! Kim Dogeza is not a bad person!"

They were people who received help from Kim Dok-Ja's companions during the fight against other Japanese that chose to become the calamities of the [Peaceland].

Besides them, several Incarnations affiliated with and agreed with them.

[Quite a few Constellations agree with the opinions of the Incarnations!]

['s Probability is falling into unrest!]

Once they detected the Probability moving towards a suspicious direction, the Great Dokkaebis quickly stepped forward to rectify that.

[Do not forget, everyone. He's the 'Enemy of the Scenario'.]

[You may not be aware of this, but from the beginning, 'Kim Dok-Ja' had been clearing the scenarios with the purpose of ruining this world-line.]

Quite unlike themselves, these usually-arrogant Great Dokkaebis began speaking in a polite tone of voice. And as the footages of Fables began playing in the vast skies above, the Dokkaebis' speciality began as well.

[He betrayed this world-line and made deals with the 'Outer Gods'.]

Inside the screen, Kim Dok-Ja was making a deal with the 'Secretive Plotter'. Since there was no voice being transmitted, his expression came across as especially sinister.

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That wasn't all. Everything he had done so far was now being laid bare to the rest of the world. From when he released the grasshoppers in the subway and didn't try to save anyone else, to when he didn't do anything back in the Geumho station even though he could've saved many others…

This collection of only the worst moments of someone was trying to create a brand new Kim Dok-Ja in this world.

[If he achieves his goal, then only the pure destruction awaits this world.]

Soon, the screen changed to that from the 「Journey to the West」.

The Great Fable 「Liberator of the Forgotten Ones」.

It was the scene of him, surrounded by the Outer Gods, liberating the 'Nameless Ones'

trapped inside the scenario. Unfortunately, perhaps due to the Dokkaebis'

interference, him inside the Fable no longer looked saintly. No, he truly looked like the leader of a cult freeing demons in order to really destroy this world.

[He acquired the knowledge of the future through uncommon means, and he used that for his own benefit.]

Kim Dok-Ja holding onto his smartphone was now ordering his companions around.

[Him becoming the 'Demon King of Salvation', then the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', they were all simply part of his plan.]

The storytellers worked together to drag Kim Dok-Ja's position down from

'protagonist' to the villain. They were changing his Fable into a sly and cowardly one.

['s Probability is mobilising!]

This action definitely went against the nature of the storytellers themselves. Even then, these Great Dokkaebis didn't hesitate one second. Because, these storytellers also desired their own ■■, as well.

[And now, he has become the 'Outer God' Monarch to destroy this world.]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The public sentiment within was rapidly changing.

Asuka Ren's complexion paled greatly. Anna Croft and her unreadable expression walked past the Japanese woman's side and muttered to the latter.

"It's too late now."

'Zarathustras' began advancing forward, and those Constellations greatly hesitating also joined in the battle.

Gah-aaaaaaah!

The 'Nameless Ones' screaming in pain collided against the front of the Constellations.

「All the creatures related to Kim Dok-Ja were pointing their blades at each other.」

And Jeong Hui-Won found herself in the middle of this battlefield, watching Kim DokJa's fight.

Even if she didn't help him out, there were plenty of 'Outer Gods' fighting alongside him next to him. They were huge cephalopod-type monsters, Outer Gods with baby-like bodies yet with heads of giant flowers, etc.

Even if Jeong Hui-Won borrowed Uriel's powers and went all out, she'd not be able to win. Standing among them, Kim Dok-Ja truly looked like the great calamity trying to end this world-line.

「Jeong Hui-Won thought that she understood Kim Dok-Ja.」

She didn't know the conclusion Kim Dok-Ja truly wanted. However, she believed that she knew without being told what it was. She thought that the end of the world she wanted was the same as what he wanted.

「However, could this be the end he truly wished for?」

Maybe, there was no such thing as comrades to him?

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…!]

She knew. Jeong Hui-Won knew better than anyone what Uriel was trying to say. She

also knew that Kim Dok-Ja treasured his comrades. Perhaps too much, and that's why he was capable of doing something like this.

Kim Dok-Ja, he was planning to sacrifice himself and allow his companions to see the end of this world.

「No matter how far she reaches out, she just couldn't touch him.」

It was as if a huge wall was standing before her eyes. And this wall was preventing her from getting nearer to him.

"Just how…"

Perhaps, Jeong Hui-Won was too exhausted now to long for the desired conclusion.

「Kim Dok-Ja is a type of person who didn't listen to anyone.」

The grip of the sword in her hand felt cold. This sword that Kim Dok-Ja had personally crafted for her and placed in her grasp. This sword that remained as the symbol of her beliefs from the [Paradise] all the way to here.

['Judge's Sword' is crying out!]

The sword that should react only in the vicinity of 'evil' was now crying out.

The Great Dokkaebis declared as if to make a mockery out of her.

[This is the hidden truth regarding the Enemy of the Story, 'Kim Dok-

Ja'.]

She wanted to confirm it.

If you are truly the 'Kim Dok-Ja' that I know.

And, if what you want isn't the same as what I want, then…

「… Then, whether it'd be alright to end him with her own hands.」

"Hui-Won-ssi."

As if he understood her heart, Yi Hyeon-Seong remained next to her side.

"I shall go with you."

He literally became a shield of forged steel and ran forward while creating a path. He pierced through the waves of the stars and storms of the Nameless Ones. Just as Jeong Hui-Won had something to confirm, so did Yi Hyeon-Seong.

Something that needed to be confirmed over and over again.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

As if riding on the wave itself, the two of them flew up and landed near Kim Dok-Ja's rear in an instant. Such a thing was only possible because the other Outer Gods were all concentrated on his front.

"Hui-Won-ssi!"

Was it because of the Ring of Chaos drawn on the back of her hand? The 'Nameless Ones' ignored her even after discovering her presence and simply rushed forward.

Kim Dok-Ja standing tall like a huge skyscraper was now before her. Thick, pitch-black liquid dripped from that massive body.

Without even realising it, Jeong Hui-Won reached out and touched that exterior.

It was unfamiliar.

In the past, she got to hold the sleeping Kim Dok-Ja's hand tightly. It was after he returned from another world, passed out for the whole day in a room the companions had prepared for him. What did his hand feel like back then?

Perhaps he sensed her presence, because the large head of the Outer God King shifted and looked behind himself.

Ku-gugugugu…

White breath leaked out from that huge head.

"Kim Dok…”

Even though she knew she shouldn't, Jeong Hui-Won still ended up taking several

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steps back. His huge jaw was opening towards her.

[Scenario's Probability is activating!]

[All of your Fables are warning you!]

The Outer God King's large black eye reflected her current expression.

She didn't want to make that kind of a face. She didn't want to look at Kim Dok-Ja with that sort of eyes. Unfortunately, her hands were already moving, independent of her will.

"Aaaaaaaah!!"

The [Judge's Sword] cut down the tentacle reaching out to her. As if they were now irreconcilable enemies, her sword moved uncontrollably.

The tentacle burst open noisily and Fable leaked out from it.

「"Dok-Ja-ssi, we're happier now compared to back then, right?"

"…If you mean now is better than before, then yes, you're right."」

It was a Fable even she knew well.

「"I think so, too."」

She listened to that story while staggering unsteadily no her feet. The story that only Kim Dok-Ja and Jeong Hui-Won remembered managed to grab hold of her mind.

After getting rid of her blurred vision, she got to see the surrounding view. She thought that she managed to cut down quite a number of tentacles so far, yet there didn't seem like any noticeable wound on his body. And in the meantime, Kim Dok-Ja's size had ballooned up even more, to an extent that it became hard to believe this used to be a single person.

He now resembled a massive wall standing tall all by himself.

[[■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■…]]

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A wall that would never be filled up no matter what was written on it. And as she stood in front of this wall, Jeong Hui-Won despaired.

Who cared about the [Final Wall]? She couldn't even manage to overcome a wall of just one person.

She then spotted Han Su-Yeong shouting at her in the distance while trying to get here.

If it was her, could she be able to cross this wall?

- It must be nice, being a writer and all.

During the 's vacation, Jeong Hui-Won lying on the middle of a mountainside said that to Han Su-Yeong.

- What do you mean, nice?

- No, well, a person who can write well also knows how to speak eloquently too, right?

I wish I could be like that, too.

- What, so you can write a love letter to Yi Hyeon-Seong?

- No, not that.

Jeong Hui-Won wordlessly stared in Kim Dok-Ja's direction. Just from that stare alone, Han Su-Yeong seemed to have figured out what her conversation partner wanted to say.

Kim Dok-Ja, struggling so hard in front of his own comrades. The fool that was idiotically trying to carry out a joke-like scenario of [Workers' day-off] – Han Su-Yeong saw him and replied like this.

- Anyone can write a story.

Jeong Hui-Won raised her head and looked at this creature that used to be Kim DokJa.

She was not a writer like Han Su-Yeong. On the other hand, she was also not an avid reader like Kim Dok-Ja. So, she could neither write like Han Su-Yeong nor read like Kim Dok-Ja.

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However, that still didn't mean she couldn't write or read anything.

- Who cares if you can't write well? Just like you said, you aren't a

novelist, right?

For sure, this world could be inside of the novel, the 'Ways of Survival'. It could very well be a story written by an author living somewhere, and read by someone else.

However, this 'novel' was her life.

「And that was why she too had the right to write this world's next sentence.」

Jeong Hui-Won slowly lowered her sword and asked. "… Dok-Ja-ssi. Do you remember that time?"

She didn't know if he was listening or not. Despite that, she still placed her hand on the very small knick she created on this massive, expansive wall. The scenes she experienced together with Kim Dok-Ja leaked out from that knick. There they were, climbing up the heaven's stairs while kitted out in formal attire.

"I was really happy back then. When we went to the department store together to buy new clothes and visited like a bunch of celebs."

She liked this world. Everything was being destroyed and all she could see was extensive devastation, yet because this was such a world, she got to find her true worth.

“…You said this, didn't you? That this world is preferable. We're people like that, aren't we?"

Kim Dok-Ja's answer didn't arrive.

Jeong Hui-Won widened the wound on the tentacle. As if to say, don't forget this wound, please remember her just as he'd remember this wound.

"That's why, you are someone who can only do this, right?"

Jeong Hui-Won understood Kim Dok-Ja.

「If she doesn't kill Kim Dok-Ja, this world will perish.」

The eye of the massive Outer God King was now looking at her. And it seemed like he was expressing his agreement from the way his head was moving. Jeong Hui-Won looked straight into that eye and spoke.

"How can I even kill you…"

Her vision blurred again, her body shivering.

Kim Dok-Ja's salvation was cruel. Like rescuing a drowning person with a blade, those saved by him were inflicted an unhealable wound.

"Don't make me laugh… This is no salvation…"

Jeong Hui-Won tottered as if she was about to lean against the wall.

A world where no one tried to save another. In this world where only victims existed, no, a world where the wounds of the victims were in full display, here was the lone hand full of scars extending out to her.

「Kim Dok-Ja was already extending his hand out from there.」

It wasn't just the person reaching out, but the one grasping that hand also required courage to do so.

Courage to hold that scarred hand, courage not to give up.

Even if she knew this wouldn't heal her, even if she knew that holding that hand would only inflict her with a greater wound – courage to hold that hand in order to live for one more time.

「Some salvations aren't completed by the one giving them out, but by those receiving them.」

Jeong Hui-Won's palm left a deep imprint on the tightly-held Outer God's skin. She stared at that imprint for a very long time, then slowly raised her head, her hand grasping the sword tightly.

And when she did, a certain message resounded out within her ears.

[Completion of the Incarnation 'Jeong Hui-Won's' ■■ is imminent!]

Just like holding the hand tightly, she strengthened her grip on the sword.

[Your ■■ is 'Salvation'.]

Fin.

The sight of Jeong Hui-Won running forward could be seen.

She slid among the 'Nameless Ones' like the moonlight sliding off the blade.

The answer she was searching for was there.

[Incarnation Jeong Hui-Won's ■■ is 'Salvation'.]

Everyone had their own ■■. Finally, the moment of choosing their own conclusions had arrived for the 's companions.

"Jeong Hui-Won!"

Her [Judge's Sword] drew a spectacular trajectory. The companions

watched that sword trajectory and hurriedly chased after her.

Yi Gil-Yeong was about to leap into the air along with Yu Sang-Ah, but had to stop because of a girl was about to be left behind.

"Shin Yu-Seung…”

Shin Yu-Seung standing there all alone, was crying. Standing in the exact same location as before, her feet not going anywhere, and her gaze fixed on one spot – it was quite clear what she was looking at right now.

[Fable, 'Saviour of a Star', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

It was the Fable that only Shin Yu-Seung possessed.

A Constellation and an Incarnation, connected through that radiating starlight. The light emitted by the Fable was so beautiful and radiant that Yi Gil-Yeong unknowingly reached out towards Shin Yu-Seung.

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「Yi Gil-Yeong was envious of Shin Yu-Seung.」

Just what was it like for one person to understand another?

He was too young to truly understand the meaning of the word 'understand' itself.

Sometimes he'd feel this sense of deprivation because of that, but on the other hand, he actually liked the fact that his age could be used as an excuse.

「It's possible for you to not get it yet. But, that's okay.」

「You don't need to do this, but I'm sorry that we have to rely on you, Gil-Yeong-ah…

」

「Hey, kid, stop showing off and get back.」

He was relieved. He even thought that it was a fortunate thing.

It was fortunate that he got to meet such people in a world like this one. People that he could rely on and act like a child, yet still could remind him with the fact that he was indeed a child.

「However, Shin Yu-Seung was here, too」

There was another child with them who didn't act like one. It was a girl who always looked up at a star. Yi Gil-Yeong also looked up at the same star – the star he liked. He knew very well the sorrowful light that star emitted, and how its colour would change when it tried to hide its true intentions or tried to lie.

「However, he didn't know as well as Shin Yu-Seung did.」

"How long are you going to stand around dazed like that? Let's go."

Shin Yu-Seung absentmindedly turned her head towards him. While meeting her gaze, Yi Gil-Yeong snatched up her hand. Then, the two kids began running. Sweat filled the tightly-held small hand.

'I don't understand Dok-Ja-hyung as much as Shin Yu-Seung.'

She was the Incarnation of the Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation'. No one could

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pry them apart or get in between them.

"You think you're the only one worried about hyung? You think you're the only one feeling sad?"

Yi Gil-Yeong shouted without even looking back and continued to drag Shin Yu-Seung.

He hated the idea of looking younger than her. But for at least today, he wanted to behave like a child.

"I don't like the Han River. I like oceans better. And I don't like pizza but prefer fried chicken."

He too had been saved by that star, that's why.

"Going to the PC Bang! Playing phone games! And…!"

The star he liked so much could be seen in the distance. However, it didn't look like a star now.

"And, also…"

The star, the subject of jealousy and envy from the Constellations that ruled the heavens, was now…

[[■■■■■■■■■■■…]]

…Now looked like a scary great demon from the webtoons the boy enjoyed reading so much.

The moment that huge head with tentacles wiggling about turned in his direction, Yi Gil-Yeong's running legs froze still.

The king of another world, now grown to a height even taller than a skyscraper.

The 'Enemy of the Story.'

The villain who would destroy this world.

「Did that demon look like Kim Dok-Ja to Shin Yu-Seung?」

"I…"

Yi Gil-Yeong muttered while trying to fight against his body's

trembling. Against the fear that that thing might not be Kim Dok-Ja he used to know.

[Do not get fooled!]

[That creature will destroy this world!]

[He's a being that only cares about himself. To him, your survival holds no meaning at all.]

Actually, the Kim Dok-Ja he had been looking at was wrong.

「"Hyung, are you a god?"

“…Wha?"

"Or, are you the 'protagonist'?"」

The fear that the words spoken by the Dokkaebis turned out to be correct.

「"I'm not a god nor am I a protagonist. In fact, I've been always envious of the real protagonist."」

Yi Gil-Yeong finally managed to stop the trembling and worked up his courage to look up. The vast Outer God's eye was now looking straight at the boy.

Kim Dok-Ja's heart couldn't be seen; not a single thing about that Outer God felt like Kim Dok-Ja.

The only thing remaining was belief.

- Gil-Yeong-ah. There is more than one way to form relationships.

Some time ago, he had a chat with Yu Sang-Ah regarding his dilemma related to Shin Yu-Seung. At the time, she answered like this after closing shut the book she was reading.

- It's similar to how different people interpret the same sentence differently. So…

Yi Gil-Yeong wasn't much of an avid reader so that comparison didn't resonate with him. Still…

- I think I understand.

He too had his own skill of conversing with the others.

- It kinda feels different when talking to a praying mantis and a cockroach, you see.

The [Diverse Communication] was such a skill, that allowed him to communicate with species different than his. However, the boy lacked a skill to understand other human beings.

What kind of a person was Kim Dok-Ja? He wasn't sure.

However, there was this one image that popped into his head first when trying to think of the person called Kim Dok-Ja – the sight of people with their heads or bodies blown up.

「"I'm going to trouble you for a bit."」

And then, the face of Kim Dok-Ja as he placed a grasshopper within the boy's grasp.

[Fable, 'Insect King', has begun its storytelling!]

Suddenly, the surrounding view shook and a Fable began waking up within the boy.

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is grinning insidiously.]

A swarm of yellow locusts buzzing in from somewhere swirled like a tornado and began enveloping the entire world.

「On that day, Yi Gil-Yeong thought to himself that it'd been nicer for the whole subway train to be flipped on its head. Just like the grasshopper that died in his hands.」

This incredible feast of Status caused the 'Outer Gods' to scream.

Constellations of began pouring out their messages.

[Constellations leaning on the Absolute Evil spectrum are warning the 'Ruler of the

Deepest Pit'!]

[Portion of Demon Kings are greatly astonished by the Incarnation's power!]

The Fable flowing vigorously ignored the gazes of the Constellations and continued on with its storytelling. This story was something the boy hadn't told any adults yet.

And it was a story that Shin Yu-Seung, also a possessor of the [Diverse Communication], knew a little bit of.

「"You didn't even have enough money so why did you go and have a kid…"」

This intense stink of the brown coal, the sight of his father and mother lying on the ground like dead cockroaches – memories of him poking on the cold, unmoving flesh.

A funeral without portraits came to an end, and the fatigued eyes of his relatives looking at him.

「"That girl Yeong-Mi, I knew she'd do something like this. She was told that that bastard wasn't good for her, yet she…"」

「"So, who's going to take that boy in? What about the eldest brother's…"」

「"We can't. There are three kids in our place already."」

Yi Gil-Yeong didn't know the proper words to describe his life that had been rejected from a very young age. He didn't have any ability to explain or express how big of a wound that was. And that wound continued to fester, unable to be healed or discovered.

「"Look for an organisation. There are places that look after kids like him."」

Yi Gil-Yeong got dragged by his aunt's hand and climbed on the Seoul-bound train. And he felt dizzy while looking at the map of ant tunnel-like Seoul's subway network.

There were so many tunnels here, and he didn't know where he was heading off to.

The grasshoppers inside the insect catcher cried like a lost child.

「"This boy, really now! Throw them away! Hurry! They don't live all that long, anyway.

So disgusting!"」

What would've happened to him if the scenarios didn't start on that day?

"Dok-Ja hyung!"

What if he didn't get to meet these people?

"Dok-Ja hyung! I'm over here!"

Yi Gil-Yeong cried out loudly enough to tear out his vocal cords.

It was fine if his voice couldn't reach its target. It was fine if he wasn't Kim Dok-Ja's Incarnation.

「"Gil-Yeong-ah. If you can't say it, then it's okay to not say anything. However, you must remember this one thing, okay?"」

The boy wanted to say this to him.

「"When you wish to say something, this hyung will be by your side to listen."」

…That, Dok-Ja hyung wasn't a villain.

…That, he was a just regular person who happened to rescue the boy from other regular people.

[Kill him! We only have to push a little bit harder!]

[They are failures from a different world-line! Do not mind it and push harder! Killing them now will end this!]

The ranks of the 'Outer Gods' fighting out in the front were crumbling now. One of the sides seemed to break down completely, then a group of Incarnations led by the Myth-grade Constellations began advancing towards Kim Dok-Ja. He needed to stop them somehow.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[Applicable action is prohibited by the 「Bureau」's Probability.]

[The target you wish to protect is the 「Enemy of the Story」.]

He needed to convince them that Dok-Ja hyung wasn't a person like that. But, how should he…

Ku-gugugugu…

Even as his enemies rushed in, Kim Dok-Ja simply stood there like a wall. He seemed to be saying something every so often, yet those words couldn't be understood. Yi Gil-Yeong wanted to understand them, though. He hated leaning against the wall, all powerless and helpless. He wanted to stand on Kim Dok-Ja's side.

He didn't care if this sort of world was destroyed or not. If Kim Dok-Ja was the enemy of a story, then he'd also become this 'Enemy of the Story', too.

However, Kim Dok-Ja was too difficult to understand for him.

He hated the fact that he was a little kid. If only he was an adult. If only he was Han Su-Yeong, Yu Jung-Hyeok, or Jeong Hui-Won…

…If only he was Shin Yu-Seung.

He felt the sensation of the tightly-held hand. Shin Yu-Seung was still there.

"…You idiot. Wake up."

The swarm of locusts flying around settled down.

Shin Yu-Seung spoke up. "I can't understand ahjussi, either."

[Exclusive skill, 'Superlative Diverse Communication', is activating!]

"I'm just doing my best trying to understand."

The skill of these two kids that allowed them to control the Chimera Dragon activated simultaneously. And now, they were in the most optimum state to understand each other.

Yi Gil-Yeong couldn't read Kim Dok-Ja. However, Shin Yu-Seung seemed to know how, at least just a little bit.

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The Fable these two read together began rocking the world. And it was as if Kim DokJa's face could be seen ever so faintly now. It seemed like the figure of Kim Dok-Ja they knew was almost within reach.

[Fable, 'Saviour of the Star', is having a chat with the Fable, 'Insect King!]

"Hey, kids."

Han Su-Yeong stood next to them as if to provide protection. And Yi Hyeon-Seong, Jeong Hui-Won, and Yu Sang-Ah stood nearby to

protect them in turn.

「Adults looking at the world together with the kids were here.」

Yi Ji-Hye's battleship cast a shadow from the air. Both Gong Pil-Du and Yi Seol-Hwa could be seen near the cannons of the vessel. Yi Ji-Hye then unsheathed her sword as if to imply that she was ready to fire at any time she wanted to.

That prompted the Great Dokkaebi Onsae to ask them.

[Are you trying to protect him? Even though you know what kind of existence he is?

He's no longer the 'Kim Dok-Ja' that you know. The truth has been exposed to the rest of the world…!]

"Don't make me laugh. That ain't the truth. You think truth is that simple? What you've shown is simply edited footage. And that's how you've all been creating scenarios so far, right?" Han Su-Yeong spoke to the approaching Constellations as if to issue a warning. "Don't care whether he's become the 'Enemy of the Story' or whatever, he's still our comrade. So, don't you dare touch him. Got that?"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is roaring out!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is exposing her Status!]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is charging up his lightning!]

"You touch him, and we'll kill you all."

The moment the Constellations protecting made a move, the powerful momentum of the opposing Constellations froze still for a moment there.

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Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[A portion of Constellations agree with Incarnation 'Han Su-Yeong's' words, and…!]

Great Dokkaebi Harong detected the tremor within the Probability and promptly cut the messages off.

[How laughable. You want to protect him? You lot who can't even understand what he's saying?]

[is warning the Great Dokkaebis for their interference in the scenario!]

Frustrated by how the scenario wasn't unfolding in the way they desired, a Great Dokkaebi enduring the aftermath's storm asked them.

[Can you not see his current appearance?]

Incarnations that got near Kim Dok-Ja shrunk back and began retreating away. It was the same story whether they were Incarnations hostile towards him or carrying a favourable impression of him.

The Outer God, now reaching high up into the heavens. The moment everyone looked into his eye containing the abyss itself, they shuddered and collapsed on their butts.

[None of you know what he feels, what he desires, and what he thinks about. Because you are all measly humans. Because you are creatures that can never understand another existence even if you devote your entire lifetime to it.]

Everyone from looked up at Kim Dok-Ja. What the Great Dokkaebi said was true. They couldn't understand him.

[The target you wish to protect is the 「Enemy of the Story」.]

As if to wake up the characters that had forgotten their roles, the Great Dokkaebi shouted out loudly. [None of you have a choice in this matter! Kill him. If you don't, this scenario will not end!]

['King of the Stories' is observing the direction of the Final Scenario.]

The oldest storyteller in this world was also watching the unfolding events.

Along with her companions, Han Su-Yeong raised her head, and looked at the place where the 'King of the Stories' was – the being that summarised all the scenarios. She looked at the endlessly-stretching [Final Wall].

「That wall is where their story would be recorded.」

"The scenario won't end? Nice. Is that not what every reader wishes for?"

[Incarnation 'Han Su-Yeong' has gotten much closer to her ■■.]

Han Su-Yeong then looked up at Kim Dok-Ja. When she glared continuously at the giant head of the cephalopod, she thought that it began to resemble Kim Dok-Ja's face just a little bit.

"The story I'm writing definitely requires that idiot Kim Dok-Ja's presence."

Han Su-Yeong roughly unfurled the bandages like an author ripping up the manuscript she didn't like. Her Fable dyed in the [Black Flame] spread out in the air like pitch-black ink.

As if to imply that she could write as long as she wanted to.

[is surprised by the Incarnation 'Han Su-Yeong's' decision!]

[Many Constellations are astonished by the Incarnation 'Han Su-Yeong's' ■■, and…]

[The target you wish to protect is the 「Enemy of the Story」.]

[Applicable action is prohibited by the 「Bureau」's Probab…]

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is proud of his Incarnation.]

Han Su-Yeong smirked. "Let's not end the scenario, forever."

[Incarnation Han Su-Yeong's ■■ is 'Neverending Story'.]

Fin.

Every Dokkaebi dreamed of becoming the 'Great Dokkaebi'. That was the peak of one's tale that a 's Dokkaebi could reach.

Yet, those that did reach the top continued to dream.

Bihyung stared at the [Final Wall] utterly filling up the view out from the front of the Ark. Even though so many stories existed, most of the wall was still empty.

[…Is there a reason to go this far??]

Bihyung's anger caused the Great Dokkaebis' communication line to go silent. He then continued to observe the 's companions from the skies of the Final Scenario. And at the figure of Kim Dok-Ja as the Outer God.

Starting from the subway that day, all the way up to the Final Scenario; while Kim DokJa became the Demon King of Salvation, then became the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', Bihyung also became a higher class Dokkaebi, before eventually ending up as a Great Dokkaebi himself.

「The biggest mistake a storyteller can make is excessively interfering in a scenario.」

Dokkaebis' mission was to attract as much attention of the Constellations and create stories that would be recorded on the 'Final Wall'.

That was why Dokkaebis should never be dragged around by the scenarios themselves. They must never be seduced by the Fables blooming from within the scenarios, and especially should not empathise with the Incarnations' pain.

But, Bihyung made that very blunder.

While looking at their Fable, several of the feelings he had forgotten in the past woke back up again – that flutter of one's heart when one scenario ended and the next one came around; that sense of fulfilment after seeing the Constellations rejoice or wallow

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from the scenario he had cooked up.

Bihyung learned about 'scenario' from Kim Dok-Ja.

[They are not carrying out the scenario incorrectly. From the beginning, 'scenario'

flows in a reversible, malleable way. Meaning, it flows in the direction that many stars wish to see. Other Constellations of are…]

[Looks like you care greatly about this Fable since you helped to foster it, but listen well. There is something called the flow of the bigger story.]

Bihyung was about to raise his voice only to hold himself back. He had to, as every other Great Dokkaebi was now focusing on him. Although vexing, he had no choice as the youngest in this group.

Great Dokkaebi 'Garang' finally broke the silence it had been maintaining until now.

[A young Great Dokkaebi such as yourself probably finds such Conclusions quite fresh.

However, I've witnessed Fables like that many times before. Do you honestly think that, in its immense history, there had been no one else who resented

and tried to destroy it?]

The Great Dokkaebi Garang, one of the oldest Dokkaebis in existence, and also the closest aid to the 'Dokkaebi King', too.

[There have been countless destructions before.]

Bihyung simply couldn't unpack the remorse faintly discernible from that tone of voice.

[Not all destruction is the same,] replied Bihyung.

A few Great Dokkaebis glared at him as a warning. However, he tried his best not to shrink back and held Garang's gaze. The latter stared at the former with mysterious, profound eyes and only after a lengthy amount of time, opened its mouth. [Indeed, the

■■ they dream of is slightly different from other Fables.]

Perhaps that statement got on its nerves, the Great Dokkaebi Onsae stopped observing and tried to intervene. Garang raised its hand first and stopped its colleague while continuing on with its words.

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[But, that difference is the threat itself. Not every Fable will become a foundation for the next one.]

[What do you mean by that?]

[There are certain Fables that will completely break the scenario.]

Gah-aaaaaaah!!

The screams from the 'Nameless Ones'.

Once upon a time, they too were beings that participated in different scenarios. They cried out in despair and attacked the Constellations. And in their centre was the Outer God King Kim Dok-Ja leading these godly beings from the other worlds.

「The Enemy of the Story.」

To Bihyung's knowledge, no other calamity was given that title. He hadn't even heard of the plan to give that title in the first place.

Garang continued on while watching Kim Dok-Ja's resistance.

[At the beginning of every scenario, the protagonists will always experience the deviation from the normal world. They will fight against the enemies appearing before them, experience dilemmas, and sacrifice something in order to emerge victorious before returning to their original world to receive their deserved rewards.]

Bihyung knew of that theory. The first thing the lower-ranked Dokkaebis would hear about was that ancient rule of the scenario.

[Although outdated, that is still the focal point of the scenario. This cycle has to be protected so that the next scenario can be created, and the next world-line can open up. Conflicts will be mended, wounds will be healed; the world must remain in one piece as if nothing had happened to it.]

The distant foot of a mountain range collapsed before exploding spectacularly. The number of Constellations gathering was constantly increasing.

Bihyung knew the truth. This very 'Final Scenario' had been planned from the get-go.

「The end of the world will come, and then, it'll be defeated.」

That imaginary enemy called the 'Outer God King' only existed for that sole purpose.

Stars that once used to be at odds with each other would unite against the advent of a powerful enemy and fight together; some may die and some may survive, but they would still get to resolve all the old conflicts. The world would regain its peace. The gossipers would sing about this history and pass it down through the generations.

「And nothing will change. will continue on.」

And that was the truth of the 'scenario' that the Dokkaebis pursued.

The scenario must cycle back and repeat itself.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are excited by the 'Final Scenario'!]

To ensure that no one realised what the actually was, and why the scenario had to be repeated, brand new stories had to be supplied to the Constellations.

However, there were a few that resisted against this.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is continuing with its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is rejecting the predetermined development.]

Those that resisted against the scenarios predetermined for them, and they wished to bring down the existence of the itself.

[Incarnation 'Han Su-Yeong's' ■■ is 'Neverending Story'!]

The 「Neverending Story」.

The contradicting ■■ that didn't acknowledge the end as an end, was glowing brightly over yonder. That was the conclusion an author, not a storyteller of the universe, had decided on.

They were existences that rejected the 's cycle and chose to fight on forever.

Kwa-aaaaaaah!

As the explosion roared on, the Great Dokkaebi Garang finally made its declaration.

[Let us close the lid on this world-line here.]

The Great Dokkaebis keeping silent, and those that were observing the responses of their peers until then, all nodded their heads in unison.

Even before Bihyung could say something, Baram next to him spoke up first. [Bihyung, I'm sorry, but things have come down to this. It seems that you'll have to overlook it this time.]

The moment Bihyung saw Baram's expression, he realised the truth. Every single Great Dokkaebi gathered here was the universe's best storytellers. They were the rulers that lorded over the scenarios and manipulated the stars while controlling this world-line.

Even then, for the first time ever, they had grown fearful of the 'story' they had created.

[We will use up the remaining Probability in order to forcibly execute the main scenario.]

'Forcibly executing' the scenario was the last trump card up their sleeve that the Dokkaebis could resort to. It was kind of a 'deus ex machina' that could forcefully restrict the flow of at the cost of the truly nonsensical amount of Probability.

Especially so when trying to use it during the Final Scenario – the amount required simply defied one's imaginations.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu!

When the Bureau's Probability began moving, the skies over the whole of was blanketed by blinding explosion of sparks. There didn't seem to be any spot left for darkness to hide within this world-line.

[They must end as 'evil'.]

As if to agree with the will of the Great Dokkaebis, Great Fables began supporting them.

[Great Fable, 'Temple of the Destroyed Myth', is complying with the Bureau's will!]

[Great Fable, 'Advent of the New Dawn', is agreeing with the flow!]

[Great Fable, 'Eternal Olympus', respects the Bureau's will!]

Bihyung watched the final pages being written by the Great Dokkaebis from a step away.

[Other Great Dokkaebis are strongly urging you to make your decision!]

He was yet to agree with this conclusion.

[Bihyung!]

Even though Baram called out to him, he didn't reply.

[is resisting against the Great Dokkaebis' interference!]

The sparks in the skies soon reached the Great Dokkaebis. An incredible storm of aftermaths was rushing in. Even if they were Great Dokkaebis, trying to intervene in a scenario still required this much price to pay.

[I, 'Great Dokkaebi Garang', declare my intention to officially participate in the scenario!]

Garam's declaration prompted other Great Dokkaebis to make theirs as well.

[I, 'Great Dokkaebi Noksu', declare my intention to…]

[I, 'Great Dokkaebi Haram', declare…]

Over ten Great Dokkaebis were hardening their resolve. The meaning of officially participating in the scenario meant they were giving up on the positions of neutral bystanders.

A short while later, a message could be heard in the empty air.

['s Probability is experiencing a massive and sudden change!]

[permits the meta-like intervention.]

[From here onwards, 'storytellers' will no longer be the scenario's bystanders.]

[Many Constellations are greatly stunned by the Great Dokkaebis' decision!]

[A portion of Constellations are denouncing the Great Dokkaebis' act of brutality…!]

Bihyung stared at those Great Dokkaebis. He stared at their desire to end this world, even going as far as to ignore the Constellations and their messages of opposition.

It could be that they had been writing the 'scenario' for far too long.

There was another gaze from afar staring at these Great Dokkaebis. Bihyung met this gaze.

It was from Kim Dok-Ja, who had become an Outer God and then, the 「Enemy of the Story」. After he became an existence outside of the scenario, not even Bihyung could understand him now.

Even then, why? Bihyung thought that, in that very moment, Kim Dok-Ja seemed to be smiling. It could very well be that these Great Dokkaebis still didn't understand anything about that guy. Still failing

to understand what kind of a person Kim Dok-Ja was.

Failing to realise what it meant to officially participate in the scenario, and to become its characters.

Bihyung silently received that gaze, and took a step forward.

[Your ■■ is calling out to you.]

And so, it was now Bihyung's turn to choose his ■■.

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The intervention from the Great Dokkaebis caused the scenario's balance to tilt the other way.

[The target you wish to protect is the 「Enemy of the Story」.]

[Your actions are restricted by the 「Bureau」's Probability!]

Not just Han Su-Yeong, but the rest of the companions were being sucked into the

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storm of the Probability's aftermaths as well. Pale-blue sparks tightly wrapped around their bodies like binding ropes.

"Su-Yeong-ssi, this!"

"Those sons of bitches… They are planning to end the scenario in this way."

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is quietly seething in anger.]

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

The 's Great Fables did absolutely everything in order to resist the

Bureau. However, it wasn't enough. Their enemy this time was the strongest 'Great Fable' in this world.

[Now! Attack its head!!]

Constellations managed to pry open the gap among the Nameless Ones and advanced forward, before finally firing their weapons at Kim Dok-Ja.

"Kim Dok-Ja!"

Han Su-Yeong cried out, but her voice couldn't reach him.

[You can't protect the target.]

[Target you wish to protect is an existence you don't know.]

“…Screw you, don't give me that crap."

She recalled what the Great Dokkaebis said as if it was some kind of a curse.

A human couldn't understand another even after devoting one's lifetime.

「However, they weren't just one person.」

Han Su-Yeong looked around her. Yi Hyeon-Seong, Jeong, Hui-Won, Yi Ji-Hye, and then, Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong; finally, her comrades riding on the battleship were looking back at her.

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Perhaps, there was none among them who weren't 'Kim Dok-Ja'. Everyone here, they held at least one handful of share in Kim Dok-Ja's life.

However, there was one person missing from this picture.

'Where did that guy disappear to??'

Han Su-Yeong bit her lip. Unfortunately, she couldn't wait any longer.

"Aaaaaah!"

Jeong Hui-Won screamed as if her body was being torn apart while moving forward.

The storm of aftermath was shattering her muscles and blowing up her blood vessels.

Still, she forged ahead even as her tattered, bloodied body tottered unsteadily. She took one step at a time towards Kim Dok-Ja while gripping the [Judge's Sword] tightly.

It wasn't to cut him down, though.

Claaaaang!

Jeong Hui-Won deflected a blade of a Constellation flying in only to vomit out a mouthful of blood. Yi Hyeon-Seong was right behind her.

Ku-dudududu!

The Outer God-ified Kim Dok-Ja was fighting against the Constellations from within the storm of aftermath. And his comrades were protecting him even as they were left in tatters by the exploding sparks.

“…There are this many people here, yet we can't protect Kim Dok-Ja?"

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

[Fable, 'Saviour of the Star', is searching for the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

[Fable, 'Insect King', is searching for the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

[Fable, 'Judge of the Apocalypse', is searching for the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

Every Fable they owned was searching for Kim Dok-Ja. They were crying out towards the man they used to know.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is continuing with its storytelling!]

If they couldn't fight together because they couldn't understand him, and if that's why they couldn't protect him, then…

[Many Constellations are sighing in lamentation at the 's tragedy.]

[A Portion of Constellations are lodging a protest at the Bureau's treachery and…!]

Blood trickled down Han Su-Yeong's lips. Dizziness assaulted her overheating head and her consciousness was wavering. It was also right then that someone grasped her shoulder.

She thought that curly blonde locks were dancing past her eyes, only for something to start protecting her and the companions. It felt like a transparent wall was enveloping them.

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is protecting !]

Jang Ha-Yeong materialised her wall, and while supporting Han Su-Yeong, began walking towards Kim Dok-Ja.

"Is there anyone here who likes the 'Demon King of Salvation' more than me?"

Tsu-chuchuchut!

「Dok-Ja-ssi, I'll stop telling you about that story of the lost things. It feels like you're fed up… 」

「Hyung, I'm right here. I have something I want to tell you. 」

「Don't worry. I won't go anywhere without you, ahjussi. 」

Sentences were scattering away.

Fables that had compiled so far were now intertwining into one theme.

[A fragment of the 'Final Wall' has been revealed to the world!]

[Great Dokkaebis are greatly astonished!]

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is placing its fragment into its place.]

While being supported by Jang Ha-Yeong, Han Su-Yeong reached out to the 'Outer God King' Kim Dok-Ja. She felt the sensation of touching a wall. A cold and uncaring wall.

[Nebula, 's first 'theme' has been publicly unveiled!]

This wall existed in order to let others know that someone was beyond it. To let them know there was a person requiring a wall in this world.

To let them know one could converse with another without hurting each other.

Han Su-Yeong wrote her very first words on that impossible wall.

「You idiot.」

She couldn't believe that she wrote something that stupid. However, she didn't have any energy left to write a follow-up.

It was then that the wall began shaking.

Accompanied by a light knocking noise, a new sentence she didn't write appeared above the wall.

「■■■… Han Su-Yeong.」

Fin.

That was Kim Dok-Ja. That sentence, it definitely came from him. She didn't need to hear his voice to know that.

Han Su-Yeong wrote the next sentence.

「What's this, you were alright?」

Being an author didn't mean you were in control of every word you write. And also, she was the type of person who could only write stuff like that. However, Kim Dok-Ja should be able to read that fine. Because he was the greatest reader she knew.

Knock.

Along with a slight knocking noise, she heard his laughter. Sounds of weapons clashing coming from everywhere hurt her ears. Her companions were still bitterly fighting. No time to leisurely waste time, in other words.

「You knew this would happen from the get-go, didn't you?」

「… ■■■■■」

She couldn't clearly see the sentence written on the wall. As if, the communication earlier was just a pure fluke of really low odds.

「Hey, you! Write legibly, will ya?!」

Even though Jang Ha-Yeong was helping out here, Kim Dok-Ja's message still couldn't be seen.

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is unleashing its power!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Far too many sentences were aimlessly floating above the wall.

Every single one of them happened to be what she and the rest of the companions said to Kim Dok-Ja. Some of them were clear to see, while some were indistinct.

"Su-Yeong-ah."

“…I know."

While listening to Jang Ha-Yeong's voice, Han Su-Yeong reached out to the wall one more time. She tried really hard to find Kim Dok-Ja's message by combining the floating sentences.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

[Target is an existence you can't understand!]

What connected each letter was context. Letters cast out in the sea without context were akin to a book that had been created to be unreadable.

「"I'm going home now."」

「"You'll lend me a spare battery when we go camping?"」

All she could do now was to connect those context-less sentences somehow. Inject context into these nonsensical sentences to give them meaning. Shuffle those that weren't plot development so that they looked like it.

However, it was not enough. No matter how she connected them, there would always be some part without meaning.

"Kim Dok-Ja! Say something! What is the plan?! Just what do you want us to do here?!"

No reply came back to her. The roaring Outer God King was still battling the Constellations. The heavily-bleeding companions were

collapsing within the storm of aftermaths.

Han Su-Yeong gritted her teeth. It was fine if Kim Dok-Ja didn't want to say it. The important part was reading his intentions. His intentions of making such a move without letting his companions know of his plans.

It was to figure out his thought process on choosing to become the Outer God King.

It was then words began gathering one by one.

「If the Ways of Survival was behind a paywall, just how much have I used it so far?」

「If I had ₩20,000,000 in my bank account, what would I feel?」

「If there are two rooms, then how does the remaining one get filled up, usually?」

"…If I had met you back in the normal world, I would never ever have become your friend."

Those words seemed randomly thrown out like a memo. She still collected those words and sentences, anyway.

An excellent writer had to be an excellent reader first. And Han Su-Yeong knew a way to read such things.

「How does one go about making money?」

One had to accept that sometimes, you'll run into a sentence you can't comprehend yet and flip the page over. Just so that, one day, you'd able to read that sentence when you did return to the very same page later.

[Target is an existence you can't understand!]

There was no choice but to desperately flip the pages over and over again, and then some more, to gather as many clues on those impossible sentences.

「Doesn't my life have money-making Probability or something?」

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

She saw Jeong Hui-Won kneeling down in the distance. Yi Seol-Hwa ran over and supported her, while Yu Sang-Ah and Yi Hyeon-Seong blocked the weapons flying in her direction.

[Bureau's Probability is restricting your interference in the scenario!]

Kim Dok-Ja was right. Probability was to blame for everything.

The reason why he was poor, why they ended up in this state.

[Bureau's Probability is confining your body!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Probability in this world was basically power. The scenario would flow towards those possessing more plausible Probability.

[Your Nebula has violated far too much Probability.]

Han Su-Yeong knew that. This storm of aftermath was the reward for overcoming many dangerous situations through sheer luck. They had so many companions yet none were lost on their way to the Final Scenario.

On the other hand, other Incarnations had to sacrifice so much more trying to get this far.

「Why only they… 」

「This is unfair.」

「Do you know how hard we had to struggle to get this far?」

had violated far too much Probability. No one was sacrificed when one was needed. Or, more correctly, only one person got continuously sacrificed.

"Kim Dok-Ja."

He died multiple times and got resurrected again.

He even revived someone that should've died. While using the revival attribute, or even visiting the Underworld, and going so far as to alter the future.

「And that's why Kim Dok-Ja had to become the Enemy of the Story.」

Because all the Great Fables had compiled didn't have enough Probability.

Han Su-Yeong grasped at the sentences as if she was scratching the wall. It was then a new sentence suddenly floated up.

「"For the time being, you take over the Nebula's safe."」

This was a conversation she had with Kim Dok-Ja not too long ago.

「"… What's this? I might end up spending it all, you know?"」

She received the authority to manage the safe via the system. She wondered what possessed Mister Miser Kim Dok-Ja to do this. Back then, she figured that he was simply too lazy to manage the finances and dumped the job on her shoulders, instead.

[Would you like to confirm the current balance?]

However, would that Kim Dok-Ja really hand over the 'safe' to

someone else with that reasoning?

As if she had been entranced, Han Su-Yeong opened the safe.

「"Wow, you saved up a lot, haven't you. What a miserly guy you are. What are you planning to do by saving up this much, though?"」

「"They have their uses."」

There was a humongous amount of Coins saved up in the safe. More than enough treasure to tempt any star was hidden inside there. And this was the most basic currency of sponsorship, and the power source to move the scenario.

「One of the most powerful Fables in this world is [Coins].」

However, there weren't all that many things one could do with Coins now, whether that was reinforcing the Incarnation Bodies or purchasing stuff from the [Dokkaebi Bunble].

That's why she was quite curious. What was the point of so obsessively hoarding all these Coins?

[Will you spend these Coins for the growth of the 'Great Fable'?]

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And then, Han Su-Yeong finally realised that very reason.

"I will."

[Nebula's cache of 143,245,199 Coins will be paid to the Probability!]

Ku-gugugugu!

The moment her declaration came to an end, Fables rushed in like wild predators lusting after fresh meat. Entrancing golden light blanketed the companions.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is greedily gorging on the Coin's

Fable!]

[Great Fable Torch that Swallowed the Myth's figure is ballooning up!]

[Great Fable Season of Light and Darkness's contrast is getting even clearer!]

The Great Fables would grow to possess even more power by devouring the available funds. The Fable's details would be realised more faithfully, viscerally, and also more colourfully.

Ku-gugugugu!

When the strengths of the Great Fables began resisting the Bureau's Probability, both the Great Dokkaebis and Constellations began panicking.

Jeong Hui-Won's sword grew lighter and lighter, while Yi Hyeon-Seong's shield was getting sturdier and sturdier. Monstrous beasts and insect kings Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong summoned began tearing into the Constellations in the back.

"Fire!!"

Yi Ji-Hye's battleship began firing its cannons and the Incarnations in the frontlines dissipated without a trace.

Unfortunately, their higher odds of victory lasted only for a brief while.

[Bureau's Probability has increased its level of restriction!]

The jet-black rifts began spreading in the heavens from the excessive usage of the

Probability. The entire stage for the scenario was shaking unsteadily.

Fables began leaking out from the mouths of several Great Dokkaebis. They had bet their lives on this must-win battle. In order to create the conclusion they wanted to see, these Dokkaebis personally jumped into the scenario and willingly became the part of the story.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

"Black Flame Dragon!"

Powerful [Black Flame] wrapped around Han Su-Yeong. While filtering away attacks coming in at her, more [Black Flames] were fired out. Right next to her, Jan Ha-Yeong was relying on the Murim's skills to guard her back.

Why did Kim Dok-Ja entrust her with this role?

There was someone better suited for this job, the protagonist of a certain story.

However, Kim Dok-Ja still entrusted this job to her.

Su-susususu…

Jang Ha-Yeong's wall was scattering away again. It was going away after exhausting all its powers.

The Bureau's restrictions made it harder to even breathe.

Kim Dok-Ja, momentarily within reach, grew distant again. The flow of the story was once more going over to the Great Dokkaebis. Han Su-Yeong cried out.

[Your ■■ is 'Neverending Story'.]

A story where none would be lost.

A story, where everyone would live together in a huge house at the end of all the scenarios.

The companions were fighting for that simple dream. However, their Probability wasn't enough and that dream couldn't become reality.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is now looking at his own Incarnation.]

It was right then, a lightbulb flashed brightly in her head.

Not enough Probability?

「The reason why Kim Dok-Ja entrusted this role to Han Su-Yeong and not Yu Jung-Hyeok.」

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is looking at Incarnation 'Han Su-Yeong'.]

Drip, drip…

Blood dripped down from her wounded shoulder. Han Su-Yeong haphazardly wrapped some bandages around the injury and looked up at the sky.

There they were, distant stars of , visible among the storm of sparks raining down. Far, far more Constellations than ever before were watching the last moments of this world.

[Many Constellations are dissatisfied with this scenario's development!]

[Quite a number of Constellations are criticising the tyranny of the Bureau and the Myth-grade Constellations…!]

Han Su-Yeong suddenly smiled insidiously. "That's right. You were all Constellations…"

Kim Dok-Ja should've known this. Because, he too was a Constellation.

He was a reader who knew better than anyone on how to make a scenario more entertaining and even tenser than before.

「And that's why Kim Dok-Ja hadn't said anything to his companions.」

Han Su-Yeong clenched her hand tightly. Since she had spent all the Coins, she was now literally empty-handed.

However, Kim Dok-Ja hadn't just left her with Coins only.

“…When the first scenario started, you all said this to us. That we had been living for

free. So, we should start paying the price for that."

What Kim Dok-Ja had left behind was…

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is focusing on Incarnation Han Su-Yeong's words.]

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Maitreya', is focusing on Incarnation Han Su-Yeong's words.]

…The entirety of their lives lived so far.

"What you said back then, I'm returning it in full back to you."

Along with Han Su-Yeong's signal, Biyu shut the channel off as if she was waiting for that.

And then, the Constellations' channel went dark.

[Channel BY-9158's all broadcast screens have been blocked.]

[Constellation, 'Heavenly Wind God', is panicking at the sudden blackout!]

[Constellation, 'Joseon's Number One Sorcerer', wishes to see what happens next!]

After the world had fallen into darkness, the panicky voices of Constellations from other scenario locations watching the channel could be heard resounding out.

Every subscriber had to go through Biyu's channel to watch the 's story. Even those subscribing to other channels had no choice but to

see this world through Biyu's, at least at this moment.

"From now on, our story will be a paid service."

Fin.

The announcement of the paywall brought about a deep silence in the channel.

Only Han Su-Yeong's heavy breathing could be heard within the pitch-black darkness of the stage.

"If you wish to continue watching this tragedy…"

What lacked right now was 'Probability'.

Probability. The thing that made the story flow naturally and in a plausible manner.

The set of rules that could only be changed by the gazes of countless Constellations, and the Coins they sponsored.

"…It's time you guys pay, too."

Only then did she figure out Kim Dok-Ja's plan in its entirety. And because she did, she could say this out aloud now.

Selling off the tragedy of his life lived solely for the purpose of saving his companions, just like how his mother did once upon a time; Kim Dok-Ja wanted to change this scenario by selling the tragedy had

created.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are greatly shocked!]

Han Su-Yeong's declaration caused the Constellations to grow hesitant.

She recalled the memories from back when her novel went behind the paywall for the first time ever.

「Author-nim, it'll start from tomorrow.」

She felt the exact same emotion back then as today. The feeling of not knowing what would happen in the future.

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How many people would end up reading my writing?

How long would I be able to live on by selling off this story?

'You stinking Kim Dok-Ja. So, you slapped me with this kind of role, is that it??'

What she needed to do right now wasn't selling some novels.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', wishes to tell the next part of the story!]

[Great Fable, 'Torch the Swallowed the Myth', wishes to tell the next part of the story!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', wishes to tell the next part of the story!]

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', wishes to tell the next part of the story!]

…The words written by 's blood and tears.

What she needed to sell was their life story. Fables that she couldn't

carelessly change or tell in a jokey manner. Even then, she offered up these Fables for sale to the Constellations.

Biyu and her concerned eyes were looking at her from the sky. Han Su-Yeong smiled as if to say, don't worry.

"There's no one? That's too bad. Things are about to get really interesting from now on."

Only she could do this job. Only Han Su-Yeong, designated as the baddie among , could sell this story.

As if to sympathise with her, the movements of the Outer God King was getting duller.

Maybe, he was wallowing in sorrow.

[How laughable. Who do you think will be interested in your measly little story?]

The one to shatter this silence was the Myth-grade Constellation, Poseidon. The figures of other Myth-grade Constellations could be seen in the distance as well. They were all mocking Han Su-Yeong.

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[Do you really believe that your 'Fable' is worth that much?]

It was the same with the Great Dokkaebis; they all seemed to be thinking that Han Su-Yeong's choice was an error in judgement, one made while under the weight of the encroaching end.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Once the Constellations left, the channel's size shrunk down. Some channels even tried to butt in using this opportunity. Channels that belonged to Dokkaebis hostile towards

.

[Finish them.]

Constellations manning their positions at the back made their moves. They were mostly Myth-grade, or those top-ranked Fable-grade Constellations that almost equalled them in power.

[Constellation, 'One Responsible for the Universe's Cycle', is surveying the scenario's battlefield!]

[Constellation, 'Mirror that Emits Smoke', is incarnating into the scenario's battlefield!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Thunder and War', is incarnating into the scenario's battlefield!]

Indian myth's Brahma.

Aztec myth's Tezcatlipoca.

Even Slavic myth's Perun.

The Constellations from the different large-scale Nebulas that never showed themselves in the lower scenarios until now – their movement alone was 'Fable' in itself.

And when the Great Fables began their actions, the flow pressuring the battlefield intensified even more.

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Gah-aaaaaah, Puh-guh-guk!!

The 'Nameless Ones' desperately blocking the Constellations approaching Kim Dok-Ja were blown up indiscriminately.

Myth-grade Constellations possessed the largest shares of the 'Great Fable' of each Nebula. Once they began moving their Probability, the balance of the engagement tilted in their favour in an instant.

Han Su-Yeong watched the incoming wave of the stars and muttered out. "Even in places you didn't bother to look, we managed to eke out a living."

The screens might be blacked out, but the sounds still continued to be transmitted.

And probably, her voice was being heard by every Constellation in the channel.

「Han Su-Yeong also knew. Not every Constellation liked them.」

had a lot of enemies. Some cheered their Fable on, but some others either were jealous of them, or in some cases, even hated them. At times, malice with no basis could be found, too.

However, there was one common denominator among that gamut of emotions. And that was the fact that they had been watching a certain Fable for a very long time.

「A story that you spent a very long time with will eventually become a part of you.」

Just like Kim Dok-Ja and the 'Ways of Survival'.

"However, the moment you close your eyes, this story you've been watching will end right here."

Her words didn't target any particular listener; meaning, it was a declaration aimed at everyone.

Eventually, Constellations annihilated the front ranks of the 'Outer Gods' and rushed in. The 's companions stepped up to block them.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

A baptism of Status in the form of Poseidon's wave with Zeus's lightning added on top,

crashed in. Outer Gods burning away like meat being grilled by electricity died in their droves. Even those from wouldn't be able to receive that wave with their current body conditions. Even then, Han Su-Yeong believed in her comrades.

"Even if I die, I will never stop moving."

Han Su-Yeong fired [Black Flame] with every ounce of her energy. However, its power was less than a quarter after being suppressed by the Probability.

And just as Poseidon's wave reached the front of their nose and began pouncing on them…

「For a very brief moment there, it felt as if the world came to a standstill.」

Also, it felt like a fundamental something that created this world seemed to have changed, as if a thin brush was painting over it. And then in the following moment, the frozen world began moving forward again.

[A fatal error has occurred in the Final Scenario!]

Poseidon's wave and Zeus's lightning pounced on her and .

Kwa-dudududu!!

More correctly, pounced on the protective barrier in front of them.

It was the sturdy, vast wall of forged steel. Which was Yi Hyeon-Seong's Fable. His Fable that blanketed the entire planet back in was now protecting his companions.

But, he should still be under the restrictions by the Bureau. So how could he?

"Su-Yeong-ssi."

A terrifying amount of sparks was streaming all over Yi Hyeon-Seong's body. But, it wasn't only him. Everyone from , wasting away under the Bureau's restrictions, were now enveloped in the dancing blue-hued sparks. Their once-imprisoned muscles regained their freedom, and the arrested magical energy was being freed as well.

[The error in the channel's donation payout has been normalised.]

The message entered their ears in the next moment.

[Delayed donation amounts will now be paid out!]

Biyu could be seen crying softly in the air next. At the same time, an incredible amount of indirect messages smacked Han Su-Yeong in her ear.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', happily donates half of the Coins she owns!]

Just how much was the half of Coins amassed by a Constellation at the cusp of reaching the Myth-grade? Han Su-Yeong couldn't even estimate the amount.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is paying an incredible amount of Coins while grumbling unhappily!]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is…]

So, so many stars began glowing brightly.

The Nebula's safe started filling up rapidly with wealth.

[Nebula safe total balance: 83,112,540 C]

[Nebula safe total balance: 162,423,800 C]

…

……

[Nebula safe total balance: 1,041,512,080 C]

The total Coins surpassed 100 million in no time, before breaking past a billion mark.

That pretty much determined what Han Su-Yeong should do next. Which was to spend every single cent of that donated amount into the Probability.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

"Everyone, hold on!"

[Constellation, 'Mass Production-type Maker', is grinning brightly.]

[Constellation, 'Mass Production-type Maker', has donated the number of Coins that exceeds the upper donation limit!]

The geezer wearing the pineapple-themed T-shirt.

Back when Han Su-Yeong went to shoot a commercial for the [Ferrarghini], she had a chance to chat to him for a brief spell.

「You really think such adverts will sell your car?」

When Han Su-Yeong asked, the Mass Production-type Maker replied in a somewhat obtuse manner.

「I'm not advertising to sell, but advertising the product about to be sold.」

And now, she thought she could understand that answer just a bit.

[Constellation, 'Joseon's Number One Sorcerer', is donating 5,000 Coins!]

[Constellation, 'Meirangong Marquis Zhuangmou', is donating 5,100 Coins!]

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is donating everything in his secret stash!]

[Constellation, 'Mother of the Darkest Spring', is donating half of the

Underworld's balance!]

[Constellation, 'Supreme God of Light', is donating 2,100,000 Coins!]

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming on Aquarius', is donating 1,500,000 Coins!]

Constellations of familiar Modifiers.

[Constellation, 'Lame Trickster', is donating 15,000 Coins.]

[Constellation, 'Monarch of Small Fries', is donating 450,000 Coins.]

[Constellation, 'Adventurer that Stands up an Egg', is donating 18,000 Coins!]

[Constellation, 'Master of the Niten Ichu-ryu', is donating 4,000 Coins!]

[All the stars in the Big Dipper are donating 300,000 Coins!]

[A small Constellation from a small planet is donating 300 Coins!]

Constellations that were familiar, but not counted on.

[A great number of Constellations staying anonymous have added their strength to the Nebula 's Probability!]

And finally, even the Constellations they didn't know.

Every Constellation that came along for the ride with 's Fable was now sponsoring their story.

Light returned to the once-darkened channel, and the broadcast began once more.

[Channel BY-9158's broadcast will begin again!]

The story was starting again. All these Coins contained the wills of the Constellations.

「Their desire to see the end of this Fable.」

Han Su-Yeong too understood this desire. However, there were some who failed to do so.

[What are you all doing?! Could it be that you're sympathising with those Incarnations?? With the 「Enemies of the Story」?? Everyone, you must wake up!!

Have you all forgotten who you are?! Oh, dear Constellations, don't let your eyes be stolen away by a demeaning story like that!]

The Great Dokkaebi roared out. That prompted someone to answer back.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', says she's more clear-headed than ever before.]

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

An incredible storm of Probability was pushed back, and Poseidon's wave sunk back to the ground.

Han Su-Yeong slowly closed her eyes. A breeze was blowing in.

[Will of accepts the new flow of Probability.]

Something was changing.

[is considering an alteration to the scenario's rules.]

All Probability from the Bureau ruthlessly suppressing her and her companions were dissipating away. The scenario's balance that had

been heavily tilted out of equilibrium was regaining itself.

[You still can't understand 'Enemy of the Story'.]

Kim Dok-Ja remained difficult. However…

['Enemy of the Story' wishes to be understood by you.]

…However, it wasn't as if nothing had changed.

[Scenario's rules are changing.]

[From here on, all Constellations can choose a camp to side with during the Final Scenario!]

Han Su-Yeong slowly looked around her.

The surrounding view began changing as if a layer of the world had been peeled back.

[[■■■■■■… Go!! Fight on! This is our battlefield!]]

A man astride a horse brushed past Han Su-Yeong's side. Without a doubt, he used to be an Outer God only until a second ago. An existence that used to be a 'Nameless One'.

The strange monsters covered in tentacles and sticky fluids, and caused one to feel instinctive fear simply by looking at them.

[[We can win this! Do not give up until the end!]]

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Their figures were changing. Some changed into people, some into dwarves – they were from all sorts of different species, but regardless of what, they were no longer the existences of unknown.

[[Beomgak! Move! This is the Final Scenario we've been dreaming of!]]

[[Mark!]]

All those 'Nameless Ones' now had names in this place.

[You have sided with the 'Enemy of the Story'.]

These beings rushed towards the Constellations as dusk fell on the battlefield. They formed ranks and advanced towards the Constellations.

[[I shall accompany you!]]

Among them was a man who resembled Yi Hyeon-Seong, and also a child resembling Shin Yu-Seung. Even some that resembled Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Gil-Yeong, and Yi Ji-Hye.

[[Not bad. So, then. This world-line has reached this far?]]

For a brief moment there, Han Su-Yeong saw a girl who seemed to resemble her, too.

And all of them were fighting as the ally of the 「Enemy of the Story」.

Her dazed eyes chased after their backs.

「Every abandoned world-line was converging here.」

The world that she couldn't express with mere words. The world that the [Predictive Plagiarism] couldn't read, because it could only be imagined by a reader.

「This was the world Kim Dok-Ja had been dreaming of.」

Han Su-Yeong slowly turned around towards the spot where the Outer God King was only until a moment ago. And a certain man stood on that very spot where a deep abyss cast by the massive creature's size used to exist.

「"Han Su-Yeong, what should an extra do in order to garner attention?"」

The white coat revealed itself fleetingly underneath the tattered and torn black coat.

「"You're an extra because no one pays you attention."」

Han Su-Yeong staggered towards that spot.

「"Well, there isn't any clear solution. Normally, you grab some attention by sacrificing yourself, or…"」

She walked and walked some more, and eventually, reached the front of that man.

「"… Or, you give them stories of their own."」

The man quietly stood there and waited for her.

Han Su-Yeong stood up straight in front of Kim Dok-Ja. Quite unlike her usual self, she thought she might start crying now. Her vision blurred and couldn't see his face properly.

"You did well."

And Kim Dok-Ja was standing there.

Fin.

Seeing him smile with such a thick skin, she suddenly felt compelled to hurl several choice words at him. She wanted to say, she'll definitely kill him if he went ahead and did something like this again.

Just like how it had been. She really wanted to do that, but…

"Han Su-Yeong."

…She couldn't.

When she lowered her head, she saw Kim Dok-Ja's ankles. The battle-ready formal suit crafted by the Mass Production-type Maker was now in tatters.

His entire body, having fought Constellations as an Outer God King earlier, was riddled full with wounds, so much so that it'd not be strange for him to keel over right now.

“…Are you alright?"

And him worrying about her instead of himself only made Han Su-Yeong unable to figure out how to digest her current emotions.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is looking at you.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is satisfied with your reply.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is nodding his head.]

……

The gazes of the stars shone from the sky. Even though the indirect messages continued to rain down, Han Su-Yeong's back remained cold. The blacked-out channel of a few moments ago still remained vivid in her mind.

「If she had made even the slightest mistake… 」

Constellations might not have lent their help. Probability might not have flowed in a way she planned. Her companions might not have endured.

What had been entrusted to her up until a few moments ago was not some simple manuscript that could be revised at will.

This burden of knowing that one misstep would bring down everything they had built up together – Kim Dok-Ja had been completing the scenarios while constantly feeling that emotion.

He supported Han Su-Yeong tottering unsteadily. She was about to slap his hand away, but instead, sighed and spoke up. "Don't ever make me do that again."

"Only you could've done this."

She bit her lip the moment she heard him.

"You know better than anyone what the readers want, right?"

「What was the 'end' Kim Dok-Ja wanted? 」

What Han Su-Yeong thought about even when she found herself in a desperate situation of making the whole world her enemy, was that very question.

And perhaps, the current her should be able to reach the answer.

"Is this the end you've been thinking about?"

"Well, it's the beginning of that end."

There were many creatures brushing past them to enter the battlefield. Only until a few moments ago, they had been the 'Outer Gods', but now, they were existences with faces and their own names.

[[Attack them!!]]

[[Those Constellation dogs!!]]

Some faces they almost recognised, some others they couldn't. Someone resembled Kim Nam-Woon, while a face resembling Yi Ji-Hye could be seen, too. However, they weren't Kim Nam-Woon nor Yi Ji-Hye; no, they were simply extras from those stories that ended a while ago.

「And every single one of these existences was fighting to change this world-line's conclusion.」

Everyone from the abandoned world-lines, from the 0th turn to the 1863rd, had gathered here.

[[Go!! Everyone!!]]

Han Su-Yeong felt emotions swell up in her chest after watching their march. These people gathering here to resist the pre-determined conclusion were all 's allies.

[Nebula, 's entire roster has become the 'Enemies of the Story'!]

Companions approached them in their unsteady steps. They too, could finally see Kim Dok-Ja's world.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is sharing its understanding with the rest of 's members!]

[Fable, 'Saviour of the Star', is sharing its thoughts with the rest of 's members.]

All the Fables were talking to each other now.

Companions scanned their surroundings with dazed expressions. They too were witnessing the sight of the horrifying masks covering up the Outer Gods slipping away.

Han Su-Yeong observed each and every one of her companions, before abruptly realising something.

One of them was still nowhere to be seen.

"Where did that guy disappear to?"

When she thought about it, she found it really odd.

That guy hated the Constellations more than anyone out there. That guy, who fought the hardest among the companions, was nowhere to be seen within the battlefield for a while now.

Kim Dok-Ja promptly answered her.

"Over there."

"Wha?"

Han Su-Yeong hurriedly scanned her surroundings.

KWA-BOOOOM!

An explosion occurred in the frontline and thick dust cloud was kicked up.

Constellations from Asgard were busy crushing the Outer Gods.

[…You disgusting bastards.]

Dozens upon dozens of 'Nameless Ones' died every time Constellations crossed the battlefield.

If it was before, this scene would've been one of monsters dying; but now, it depicted the deaths of actual persons. 'Nameless Ones' lost their arms, their legs were torn off, and their guts were spilt.

They couldn't even mount a proper challenge. Most of the 'Outer Gods' that heeded Kim Dok-Ja's call and showed up here were the lower-ranked variety. Although there were a few higher-ranked creatures mixed within, they had already been felled after being subjected to a concentrated barrage of attacks from the Myth-grade Constellations. Defending against the concerted attacks of the Constellations with the remaining forces was impossible.

However, something was wrong.

「Even when there was such an overwhelming difference in combat capability, they were still ably holding on.」

Upon closer inspection, she realised that there was 'something' at the very front of the Outer Gods' ranks.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Darkish-blue sword light swept across the battlefield.

Golden afterimages scattered in the air where the sword's trajectory scythed by.

[Kuwaaaaahk!!]

The head of a Constellation stomping on an 'Outer God' just now flew away without warning. And then, another one. Then, yet another one. A pitch-black figure, currently bathed in the baptism of spewing Fables rather than blood, was continuously wielding his sword.

"Isn't that…?!"

She was well aware of the fact that there was a seriously powerful individual among the 'Outer Gods' fighting out in the furthest front. Initially, she thought that, 'since this is the Final Scenario, the really strong ones have come out of the woodwork.'

This 'Outer God' continued to cut down Constellations like pieces of papers, its sharp tail wagging this way and that.

But now that she took a closer look, that was no tail at all but a pitch-black sword, instead.

[Attribute, 'Iron-Blooded Conquering King', is activating!]

Corpses of Constellations formed a mountain. And on top of this very mountain was a throne of blood. The master of this throne was arrogantly looking down on all the stars of the world.

"This swordsmanship… you, you're Yu Jung-Hyeok."

Anna Croft gritted her teeth and emitted her sword aura.

The greatest Incarnation in America, Anna Croft, reputedly strong enough to never lose in a tactical battle.

"I'm the strongest on the continent!"

Soon after, Fei Hu's long spear stabbed through the air and flew right in.

China's number one Incarnation, Fei Hu – master of one on one combat.

"This will be my first time fighting you. However, I shall emerge victorious nevertheless."

And lastly, Ranvir Khan's palms made their move; his palms left behind clear shadows like Kali's hands, while pouring out around hundred or so ripples.

Kwa-aaaaaaah!!

The battlefield was rocked by yet another loud explosion. Fables continued to tell their stories beyond that explosion noise, however.

[Fable, 'Comrade of Life and Death', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

[A portion of Fables are being shared due to the special effect of 'Comrade of Life and Death'.]

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

While witnessing this spectacle of swords slicing down indiscriminately and both Constellations and Outer Gods dying with their bellies cut wide open, Han Su-Yeong abruptly recalled a certain old question that circulated among the gossipers.

Who was the strongest Incarnation in the world?

[Everyone, kill that guy! We can break through as long as that man is dead!]

Now, she could answer it without a shred of hesitation. There couldn't be differences in opinion on this one.

「The world's strongest Incarnation was Yu Jung-Hyeok.」

Constellations that had long discarded any semblance of their pride pounced on him.

Even though his shoulder split open and his thigh ruptured, Yu Jung-Hyeok's expression remained calm as he blocked the Constellation army rushing in at the frontlines.

Such a battle was only possible because he had regained a portion of his past memories. However, there was one thing she still couldn't figure it out.

[Incarnation Yu Jung-Hyeok is currently the 'Enemy of the Story'.]

"How can that guy be the first…??"

How did Yu Jung-Hyeok join Kim Dok-Ja even before Han Su-Yeong or the rest of the companions could?

Yu Jung-Hyeok's battlefield was steadily being pushed back after the Myth-grade Constellations pitched in. The closer he got, the more

visible the murky aura of Chaos surrounding him became. It was the power of Chaos usually seen from the 'Outer Gods'.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok had become one with 'Secretive Plotter' once upon a time.」

Only then she understood it – the reason why he could become Kim Dok-Ja's ally faster than everyone else.

Han Su-Yeong immediately flew off her handle. "You sons of bitches, not even saying a single thing to me…!"

「Yu Jung-Hyeok was well aware of Kim Dok-Ja's intention.」

Sometimes, rage would be accompanied by deep understanding.

「This tragedy could only be established when the characters deceived each other.」

Because Yu Jung-Hyeok hated Constellations more than anyone, he was able to read Kim Dok-Ja's intentions. And that was how he could make his move without hesitation.

「That was the only way to hide the fact that this was simply a 'story' from the Constellations watching on.」

Pah-chuchuchut!

Yu Jung-Hyeok had arrived in their vicinity before long; he sheathed his sword and spoke up.

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"It'll be hard to continue defending like this."

He looked back with disinterested eyes, only to meet Han Su-Yeong's glare.

He opened his mouth first. "You were late."

"Shut the hell up."

Three of them lined up side by side.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] roared out a keen, vicious cry, while Kim Dok-Ja's pair of black wings spread wide open as if to protect the two people next to him.

Han Su-Yeong clenched and unfurled her fist currently enveloped in [Black Flame] and spoke up. "… I can't figure out why this feels like it's been a really long time."

Their companions finally reached their rear.

"Dok-Ja-ssi! Su-Yeong-ssi!"

"Hyung-!!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong knelt down and protected everyone with his shield, while Jeong Hui-Won stood next to him and held her sword upright.

The Chimera Dragon carrying Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong roared out. Yu Sang-Ah's lotus pedestal spun around and surrounded the companions' sides. And lastly, Yi Ji-Hye's battleship protected the sky above them.

"Load the cannons!"

Cannons were shoring up their strengths at the ends of the vessel.

Gong Pil-Du established his fortress atop the battleship and aimed his own cannons at the ground as if to imply that he could take care of everything here.

[Every star in Nebula, , is shining brightly!]

Biyu was shining like a blue sun amidst the dancing sparks; she was sweating profusely

while receiving the Coins pouring in the 's direction.

Probability gleaming richly was now giving them blessings.

Kim Dok-Ja then spoke to his quiet companions manning his sides.

"Everyone, thank you."

Their expressions faintly trembled when he said that.

Jeong Hui-Won bit down on her lip, while Yi Hyeon-Seong wiped tears welling up in his eyes.

Han Su-Yeong could feel it.

「From the start, Kim Dok-Ja didn't plan on sacrificing himself.」

Maybe, he had thought about it over and over again – the way to make everyone happy at the end of this world.

He should know fully about the wound his companions suffered when he sacrificed himself, and then, he must've foreseen the destruction they might suffer as the price for fighting together.

And that was why he chose this scenario.

A scenario that changed scenarios. A scenario that didn't stick to the pre-determined conclusion. A scenario where everyone could reach the end together.

Han Su-Yeong thought that it'd be nice for this story to end right here.

Every emotion permeating within the words got transmitted vividly. She felt as if she now knew what Kim Dok-Ja was thinking about, and what he truly wanted here.

Only after reaching the end of everything did he finally open up his heart.

「And that was precisely why Han Su-Yeong thought that things must not end here.」

"Let's talk about that later."

Jang Ha-Yeong opened her mouth first, and…

"Everyone, fight to your heart's content. I won't let anyone die."

…Yi Seol-Hwa ended the conversation.

"Here they come!"

The march of the Constellations commenced once more.

[Do not panic! Their numbers have grown a little bit, that's all!]

[They are nothing more than a small Nebula!]

The story that couldn't find its bearing continued to flow within the rapidly-changing scenario.

Han Su-Yeong swung her fist; [Black Flame] shooting out from her knuckles pierced through the heads of the Incarnations. Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] deflected both Anna Croft's and Fei Hu's blades, while Jang Ha-Yeong's [Breaking the Sky Force Punch] shoved away the group of Constellations trying to rush in from the side.

['Hour of Judgement' is activating!]

Jeong Hui-Won's [Hellfire] burned away the stars rushing in from the front. And Yi Hyeon-Seong's forged-steel shield blocked the unseen weapons cutting through the air.

"Everyone, get down!"

Yi Ji-Hye's turtle ship finished loading its cannons and began spitting flames out. Along with blinding flashes of explosions, the enemies in the frontlines were swept away.

"Bring down that ship first!"

Incarnations waiting for their chance all leapt up into the sky. That

prompted Gong Pil-Du's turrets to spit out fire and noise, as well.

"Kuwaaaahk!"

[You pathetic fools!]

A handful of Constellations used the falling Incarnations as their footholds to fly up.

They flew up higher than the turtle ship and began firing their charged-up magical attacks.

[Die…?!]

Even before the Constellation could finish its words, its body was torn apart in half.

The Chimera Dragon roared out and ripped the Constellation's body to pieces with its massive maw.

"Hyung! Behind you!"

Yi Gil-Yeong's locusts stopped the Constellations trying to fly in.

The companions advanced forward bit by bit. Just like the time they had tread so far, they inched forward on the road where the starlight couldn't reach.

Han Su-Yeong began thinking.

In the eyes of other Constellations, they must've looked like monsters trying to destroy this world. However, that didn't matter – because that was the more exciting alternative, after all.

"Kim Dok-Ja! Destroy that ark!"

They could see the ark beyond the Constellations rushing in like storm clouds to protect it. And even now, more Constellations were rushing

out from the hull of the broken ark.

They were actually stars asleep within the [Ark], waiting to depart from this worldline.

['Enemy of the Story' is approaching the ark.]

['Enemy of the Story' will destroy all Fables in this world!]

That ark had to be destroyed in order to end the influx of the Constellations.

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"Hurry!"

[Collision of Probability has caused the rapid change to the scenario!]

[has begun revising the Final Scenario's condition!]

But then, there were certain Constellations standing before the ark.

[Constellation, 'One Responsible for the Universe's Cycle', is intervening in the battlefield!]

[Constellation, 'Mirror that Emits Smoke', is intervening in the scenario!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Thunder and War', is intervening in the scenario!]

These Myth-grade Constellations had been observing the unfolding situation until now. Only by defeating them could the ark be within reach.

Each individual combat power was more than enough, but they still lost out in the overall combat force.

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Borders in the Oceans', is greatly enraged!]

Poseidon and Zeus busy slaughtering the 'Nameless Ones' out by the frontlines joined in, leaving the companions stuck in a boxed-in position.

Ku-dudududu!

Yu Jung-Hyeok watched the spear slice past the ocean of corpses and return to its wielder, and spat out venomously. "… Poseidon."

Even if this was , they still wouldn't be able to cope with these enemies all at once. There was some leeway still left to be found on the expressions of the Great Dokkaebis.

Han Su-Yeong was angry; they possessed this much Probability, yet why couldn't they surpass those creatures?

She cried out. "Hey!! When will our own Constellations show up?!"

Those that were supposed to come hadn't appeared yet. Uriel, her own sponsor, the Underworld's couple, and…

But then, Kim Dok-Ja asked back. "Does it have to be Constellations, though?"

"What was that?"

Kim Dok-Ja grinned. Han Su-Yeong really detested that smile.

"It isn't just the Constellations that can participate in this battle now. Because, there's enough Probability here thanks to a certain someone, you see."

At that moment, Han Su-Yeong felt the back of her neck grow cold. The enormous amount of Probability that had been injected to was suddenly emptying out at once. Something that could only be summoned after using up that much Probability was arriving here.

「The existences that all Constellations feared.」

The licks of flames belonging to the conflagration burned on the ground. A sun that burned away the Fable of eternity was rising up from the east.

「No star would dare to compare itself to her brightness – the 'Living Flame'.」

And on the opposite side of the burning, screaming stars, a pure-blue ocean was crashing in. A tsunami wave flooded in from the west, as the 'Sunken Island' rose up once more.

「The calamity of the western world, 'Master of the Sunken Island'.」

[Kuwaaaahk!!]

Constellations got swept away by the wave and dissolved away as sacks of Fables in an instant.

Soon afterwards, the northern skies grew jet-black, and Constellations there began crashing to the ground like falling raindrops.

「The ruler of the northern universe, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss'.」

The 'Outer God King' smiled as he began bursting the heads of the stars like a rampaging hooligan.

And the existence incarnating into Yi Hyeon-Seong blocked the storm of aftermaths they had created.

「The 'King of Silverlight Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.」

And then, an existence approached them from a place of nothing.

With every step he took, the gigantic [Heaven Shaking Sword] clawed

the night sky and brought down many stars shining up there.

[[It's been a while, Poseidon.]]

It was a man with the exact same face as Yu Jung-Hyeok, replete with a long scar on the cheek, too.

The 'Secretive Plotter' nonchalantly strode over and grabbed Poseidon by the latter's neck, before grinning brightly.

[[This will be my 26th time killing you.]]

Fin.

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I thought that 'it' had finally happened when I became the Outer God King.

[You have become the 'Enemy of the Story'.]

This wouldn't be my first time experiencing the sensation of Fable in my entire body shattering into tiny little pieces. A similar thing happened back when I was booted out of the scenario and fell in the 'story's horizon'.

If there was one thing different between then and now, it would be me not getting expelled from the scenario even after becoming an altered existence. No, it was the exact opposite.

[You have become the boss monster of the last scenario.]

[You will be alone forever.]

[No one will understand you in this worldview.]

I memorised the loneliness I felt in that moment. This feeling of being cast away all alone in this universe. The feeling of becoming a monster that no one could understand for all eternity.

However, this also wasn't my first time experiencing such a feeling either.

「"I'm XX Time's reporter. Do you have some time to speak with me?"」

「"It's him. The son of the murderer."」

That was why I needed to take up this role. Only I could perform it to its fullest, after all. That was the price to pay for reading the story called 'Ways of Survival' to its conclusion.

「[[Your companions will never understand your decision.]]」

The 'Secretive Plotter' told me that as if he already knew what my plan was. And I understood why he had no choice but to say those words.

「"We'll find out later, won't we?"」

Neither he nor I were wrong. Just that the Fables we compiled were different, that's all.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!!

The tsunami wave of Fables unfolded right before my eyes. And the blinding sparks of Probability spread out above this wave. And on top of them all, the gazes from the Constellations were streaming in.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is watching your Fable.]

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is watching your Fable.]

[Constellation, 'Mass Production-type Maker', is watching your Fable.]

…

This wasn't a gamble that I alone could realise. Me becoming an Outer God King was merely the beginning of the final pages.

Yu Jung-Hyeok fought hard, my companions held on bravely, and Han Su-Yeong gamely attracted the Constellations.

And the Constellations believing in us made their choices.

「The plan was a success.」

The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island', the calamity of the world in the west.

The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the ruler of the northern universe.

The 'King of Silverlight Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.

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And finally, the 'Great Plotter' that crawls from the place of nothing.

The scenario's volume began expanding rapidly with the gathering of all five 'kings'.

Historical Figure-grade Constellations failed to deal with their combined Statuses and began vomiting out Fables on their knees.

These kings had been excluded from the scenario until now. After escaping from the reaches of the 'Hounds chasing after the Abyss' through the abundant Probability, they had personally descended to the scenario.

The 'Secretive Plotter' was looking in my direction. I nodded my head in return.

「And now, it was time for their stage to open.」

[U-uwuuuuh-!]

Several terror-stricken Constellations forgot their stations and began hastily running away. The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss' grabbed the nape of one of those Constellations.

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon began laughing.

[[Now, now. You leaving so soon makes it a wee bit troublesome. It only just began, after all.]]

He must've recovered some of his energy through the Probability's overflow. He glanced at me and muttered out.

[[And you, don't get ahead of yourself. We didn't come here to help you out.]]

But then, the 'King of Silverlight Heart' stood next to me and spoke up.

[[We came to aid you.]]

"I know. Thanks."

As expected, Yi Hyeon-Seong remained a trustworthy person regardless of the number of regressions he lived.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island', 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye, also made her move. Fable-grade Constellations hurriedly rushed in from both sides and tried to block them somehow, but it was a waste of time.

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[T-the island, it's, it's moving-!]

From the front of the island covered in verdant moss, silvery cannons

shone brightly.

The biggest warship in the world-line, the perfected [Turtle Dragon], spat out flames towards the rest of the world.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

The overwhelming spectacle of an entire corner of the battlefield being blowing away without a trace caused me, Han Su-Yeong, and even Yu Jung-Hyeok to become utterly dazed.

And at the furthest front of the battlefield, two 'Kings' were facing off against the Myth-grade Constellations.

「Two people who fought together a really long time ago were there.」

The 999th turn's Uriel was wrapped around in the [Hellfire]'s corona. And the other was Yu Jung-Hyeok who had survived the 1863 hellscapes to eventually become an

'Outer God'.

「In that moment, Kim Dok-Ja recalled a certain ancient battlefield.」

It was from Yu Jung-Hyeok's 999th turn.

Yu Jung-Hyeok and Uriel entrusted their backs to each other and fought together during the great war against Constellations. Yu Jung-Hyeok, blind in both eyes and roaring out, and Uriel protecting him – it was one of the scenes that I loved the most from the entirety of the 'Ways of Survival'. And that scene was being re-enacted right before my eyes.

[Fable, 'Battlefield of a Hero and Flame', is waking up from its prolonged slumber!]

A Fable that had disappeared a really long time ago was now connecting the two kings.

[[… I shall leave to you.]]

The 999th turn's Uriel spread open her wings wide first. Just as she unleashed her Status, Constellations pounced on her as if they were waiting for that moment.

They were the top Constellations from and , as well as some other lower-ranked Constellations that fought against us in the 'Demon King Selection' – the

'Last Pharaoh', and the 'Bird that Eats the Thunder'.

[Fable, 'Flame of Annihilation', has begun its storytelling!]

The moment the 999th turn's Uriel wielded her sword, the first lines of the Historical Figure-grade Constellations rushing in at her turned into powder and scattered away.

Incarnations with pale complexions hurriedly turned around to run, while Fable-grade Constellations shouted out venomously.

[Stop that sword! Stop her from swinging it, no matter what!!]

Uriel's sword carved out a burning path, and the 'Secretive Plotter' ran on it. It felt as if the history of the universe flowed within every step he took. His steps seemed neither too fast nor too slow, yet no one dared to stop him.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling.]

The most dreadful Fable in all of the world-lines began telling its story.

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling.]

Everywhere his foot landed resounded with the cries of a destroyed world. The original sin of the worlds stuck to him like a shadow and continued to chase after him.

「No Constellation could stand in his way, and no Fable could save him.」

Didn't matter whether one was an enemy or an ally, as long as one was a Constellation, one couldn't help but get seduced by his story.

When I abruptly regained my wits from that vast sorrow stained in wonderment, he was already grabbing at Poseidon's neck.

The latter managed to recover himself in time as well, and hurriedly shoved the

'Secretive Plotter's' hand away all the while unleashing his own Status.

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Borders in the Oceans', is greatly enraged!]

's Great Fable began making its move. Poseidon's [Traiana] bared its fangs

while enveloped in a powerful Fable. This was the might of a Myth-grade Constellation that anyone should quake in fear from.

However, I too was a Myth-grade now and I was perceiving his actions differently.

「Poseidon is terrified.」

His spear uselessly cut through the air, and it was no longer as sharp as before. It was a mistake unbecoming of an arrogant Constellation, and Zeus next to him roared out in alarm.

However, it was too late by then.

Sliiiice!

Something cut Poseidon's torso down, and on his chest covered in blue scales, the lengthy and black wound could be seen. From this wound, Great Fables began flooding out nonstop.

[Keo-heo-uhk…!]

Poseidon tried to press down on his chest while swinging his

[Traiana] all over the place.

The spear that drew the borders in the oceans – wherever his [Traiana] drew a line, that place would become an ocean. However, such a thing didn't happen this time. For the first time ever, the spear's blade that feared no one couldn't find what to aim at and simply trembled helplessly.

「The place where his ocean couldn't reach.」

Both of Poseidon's eyes were soon dyed in the pitch-black abyss.

Most likely, he was watching the darkest Fable known in this world right now. The one about the outer space, where both the ground and the sky held no meaning as effects of gravity didn't reach there. A complete devastation with not one precious thing remaining after everything was destroyed.

And the master of that devastation was looking up at the 's constellations.

[[Doesn't matter which world-line it is, you don't seem to change at all.]]

He didn't sound sad. If anything, he sounded relieved, actually.

Along with the cold metallic noise, the blades of the [Heaven Shaking Sword] extended out to the night sky.

[Shut your mouth-!!]

Poseidon managed to beat back the fear and hurriedly swung his [Traiana] once more, But in that exact moment, the [Heaven Shaking Sword] also made its move, as well.

I remembered seeing Yu Jung-Hyeok use a similar skill to that once before. It was a skill to cut down the stars designed by a Transcender

who had surpassed his own limit through incredible dedication and hard work.

However, something felt different. That attack, as if…

「As if, it was a sword technique created so that one man could face off against the entire world.」

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Transcending the Inner Mysteries.

The Universe Slash.

Only then did it hit home. The power the 'Secretive Plotter' displayed back then, during the battle of 「Journey to the West」, was only a portion of what he could produce.

This sword trajectory was the most beautiful I had ever seen.

His blade caused the world to split apart.

Kwa-dudududu!

The sword strike cracked apart a nebula in its entirety and scattered stardust away.

And at the end of that magic-like rays of light was Poseidon. Along with 'puh-ga-gak!'

noise, his arm and leg got cut off simultaneously.

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[Poseidon!!]

Zeus freaked out and shouted loudly.

Fables exploding forth from the 'Secretive Plotter' were swallowing up the battlefield.

The emptiness he felt while living through the scenarios was expanding.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Poseidon vomited out Fables and fell on his knees, prompting the 's 12

gods to rush in. Ares and Hephaistus roared out and swung their sword and hammer.

Unfortunately for them, however, they were smacked away by the [Heaven Shaking Sword]'s blade like a bunch of children.

Zeus yelled out in pure anger.

[Oh, the great schemer! Do not get too full of yourself! You haven't even witnessed a fragment of the myth that created yet!]

Even as he was saying that, Zeus's figure was beating a hasty retreat.

It was so obvious – the ark was waiting in the direction he was heading to.

[Father!]

The 's Constellations abandoned by him spewed out Fables from their whole bodies as the Nameless Ones gnawed on them. Dionysus carried a resentful expression as he roared in anger towards his father.

I quietly stared at those Constellations before speaking to Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok. "We need to stop Zeus."

Inside of the ark Zeus headed to was filled with sleeping Great Fables not just belonging to but countless other myths, as well. If we let him be, this scenario would become disadvantageous for us once more.

We quickly began running with everything we had on the stage currently covered in Fables from the dead stars and gods.

Han Su-Yeong, meanwhile, muttered in a puzzled voice.

"By the way, that guy…”

After cutting Poseidon down, the 'Secretive Plotter' was just standing around, dazedly looking up in a certain direction. I shifted my head towards where he was staring at.

The reason why he didn't chase after Zeus was simple. From the beginning, his purpose wasn't the annihilation of nor the destruction of the ark itself.

No, what he stared at was a certain something located much, much further away.

The 「Final Wall.」

Endless pages were flipping within his eyes as if he was utterly determined to see what was beyond that thing this time.

['s Probability is experiencing a rapid change!]

Great Dokkaebis began shouting out at the unexpected distortion of the Probability.

[Hang on! This, this is…!]

[Oh, the 'Most Ancient Dream', this…!]

[Due to the 's rapid change, the scenario content has been revised!]

[Clear condition for the applicable scenario will change depending on the camp you have chosen to side with.]

I confirmed the revised scenario detail.

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For the first time ever, the title of the main scenario was gone.

A scenario that had never happened before.

A scenario that not even the Great Dokkaebis heard of had begun.

+

Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Please destroy the ark and put a stop to Great Dokkaebis' plan.

+

I heard the freaked-out voices of the Great Dokkaebis next. With this, they were about to pay the price for giving up on being the 'storytellers' to become characters in this world.

Also, the facade surrounding us began changing, as well. As if, the world had finally permitted our existence.

"It's you…!"

The clearly-astonished Asuka Ren was looking at me. It seemed that even she could now see my true appearance, at least faintly.

As the sparks wildly danced about, the creatures of fear and disgust, 'Outer Gods' were revealing their true appearances. They were no longer the beings outside of the scenario.

[The absolute majority of the Constellations are watching your Fable.]

The scenario we had created was now being officially birthed into this world.

['Most Ancient Dream' is now looking at your existence.]

Quite likely, the 'Secretive Plotter' also heard these messages. More specifically, the messages popping up before my eyes.

+

Reward: Final Wall

+

Fin.

“…Hyung, it says that the reward is the 'Final Wall'."

Yi Gil-Yeong catching up to us spoke in a puzzled voice. However, I too had no idea about this.

The reward was the [Final Wall]…?

I wasn't sure of what that vague description could mean – was us reaching the Final Wall the reward itself, or after the scenario ended, we'd be given the ownership of the wall?

Besides, could someone even claim ownership of the concept of the

Wall in the first place?

Nothing was certain at the current juncture. But, it was a certainty that we'd reach the truth of this world when this scenario comes to an end.

[[Please, go ahead.]]

Under the 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong's protection, the comrades ran forward. As for the Constellations trying to chase us down, the 'Secretive Plotter' and the other Outer Gods blocked them.

The ark was right before us. Destroying it would take us to the end of all scenarios.

[Stop them-!!]

Starlight descended from the night sky once more. It was shocking to see that there were so many stars left still. It was also hard to tell just where these Constellations had been hiding all this time.

[It's the Outer God King! Kill him!]

Constellations pointed their weapons at me and jumped in. Even though they lived like puppets of large Nebulas and never truly cleared scenarios until now, they still managed to acquire the qualifications to enter the 'Final Scenario'.

Surprisingly enough, some of them were either former or the current subscribers of my channel. Ones that donated something every now and then to urge me on – ones that desired powerful sources of cider, and asked me for more stimulating plot development.

And now, they were standing against me.

[Kill him!]

A few of my companions seemed to be surprised by their hostility towards us.

Han Su-Yeong couldn't hold it back in and opened her mouth. "You guys still hadn't exited yet?"

What popped up in my head just then was the words the 'Guardian of the Mandala'

said to me back in the Isle of Reincarnators.

「No matter how shoddy a story is, an existence hearing and watching it for a long time will grow to love it.」

Back then, I didn't understand what he meant by that. I only thought that the 'Guardian of the Mandala' saw the tragedy of the scenario called [Great War of Saints and Demons] in such a light, that's all.

However, after I mulled over it some more, I realised that that statement probably didn't only apply to the [Great War].

The Constellations originating from Japan and fought against us during [Peaceland]

were incarnating before our eyes one by one. I even saw the 'Eight Pieces of Fire' Kagu-tsuchi and 'Controller of High and Low tides', the Water Dragon Ryujin.

The one confronting them among our companions was the protector of the skies.

[Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye', is unleashing her Status!]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is unleashing his Status!]

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Along with the sensation of a boundless ocean spreading out, the surrounding stage was submerged in abundant Status. The opponents

may be Fable-grade Constellations, but the current Yi Ji-Hye would never be pushed around by them.

However, she didn't fire away and took a look in my direction instead.

"Ahjussi."

I too knew why she was hesitating like this.

[Go! If you can't be of any use, then go and blow yourselves up!]

Constellations were pushing the backs of the Incarnations forward. These Incarnations from the Japanese side, their eyes blank, staggered towards us.

Just before we could unsheathe our weapons, someone cried out from a nearby location.

"Everyone, please wake up! Please, you must take a good look at who you're trying to fight against!"

That was a voice I definitely recognised.

"Izumi is dead, and Hiroshi also died. Just how many more must die before we all wake up? Have you all forgotten the tragedy back in the [Peaceland]??"

It was Asuka Ren.

[Incarnation, 'Asuka Ren', has become the 'Enemy of the Story'.]

Surprisingly enough, she had already chosen to side with us.

[Incarnation, 'Asuka Ren's', attribute, 'Mangaka' is activating!]

Her sword moved like a pen.

The moment her attribute came to life, Fables of not just me but the surrounding

'Nameless Ones' began shifting. Our broken Fables, the scattered phrases, were being woven into a single piece of footage.

When I thought about it, it wasn't just Han Su-Yeong who possessed 'author'-type attributes. Although different in some ways, Asuka Ren's attribute was also rather similar in other ways to hers.

"Please, stop this. You know who these people are. You yearned to be more like these people, didn't you?"

「That was the beginning.」

Incarnations half-controlled by their sponsors were about to attack us, but then, began dropping their weapons one by one. With terror-stricken expressions, they either plopped down on the ground or cried out in sorrow.

"Can't… do this… I, I can't do this anymore…"

Incarnations knelt down and muttered out while holding their heads. Meanwhile, the Constellations were exposed to danger in an instant after their puppets stopped listening to their commands. They hurriedly shouted out.

[G-get up! Hurry!]

Incarnations understood the pain of fellow Incarnations very well. Meaning, they were different from the Constellations that fell into the dime-a-dozen villainous roles after carrying out the scenarios for far too long.

"Ji-Hye-ya."

Even before I could finish, the turtle ship fired its cannons.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

The group of the Constellations were swept away as the percussion noises resounded out. Some managed to endure, though, and soon collided with my companions.

[Uwaaaah!!]

A faint light leaked out from the hull of the ark.

We couldn't afford to let more Myth-grade Constellations wake up

from their slumber within the vessel.

Fortunately, our advancing speed was not slow at all. Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] and Han Su-Yeong's [Black Flame] continued to assist me from the side and we made good headway.

If there was one thing tugging at my mind, it'd be the Probability.

Tsu-chuchuchu…

The Probability created out of the Coins donated by the Constellations…

I looked up to find Biyu controlling the channel with a pained grimace on her face. It hadn't been that long since she hatched as a Dokkaebi, so it was taking a lot out of her to exchange that many Coins into Probability. Fables began dripping out from her lips now.

"We're almost there!"

The unexpected event happened at the same time as Han Su-Yeong's voice resounded out.

[The Bureau is exercising the authority to restrict the channel BY-9158!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

At that moment, my heart grew cold.

Originally, individual channels belonged to each Dokkaebi. However, the system called

[channel] was a power founded upon the 'Great Fable' in the Bureau's possession.

[The Bureau is restricting the Coin donations to the channel

BY-9158!]

Suddenly, my movements became sluggish. It was the same for my companions. The tailwind pushing us from the back was swiftly changing into the headwind, instead.

In the distance, I spotted the ten Great Dokkaebis raising their hands together at the heavens.

"Those stinking sons of bitches…!"

It seemed that Han Su-Yeong had realised what was going on here.

[Baaaaaaht!]

Biyu let out a painful cry as if she got electrocuted and fell from the sky. Yu Sang-Ah dashed out way before I could and carefully caught the small falling figure.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is protesting against the cowardly action of the Bureau, and…!]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is greatly enraged by the unfair treatment from the Bureau, and…!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is shouting out "Those ■tty Dokkaebi sons of bit■s should…!!"]

…

Our channel was breaking down.

The Great Dokkaebi Garang spoke up. [Your Fable cannot be permitted. We simply cannot present such a Fable to the 'Most Ancient Dream'.]

I failed to understand it. They had already become a part of the

scenario, so they would be met with an incredible storm of aftermath simply by trying to exercise the Bureau's Great Fable.

[Horong, Noksu, we shall remember your sacrifices.]

Two Great Dokkaebis were being extinguished in the middle of the sky. Debris of Fable were falling off from Garang's figure, as well.

I felt a chill run down my whole body. Only now did I realise how determined those damnable Great Dokkaebis were.

['s Probability is going through another rapid change!]

The number of 'Nameless Ones' flooding the surroundings rapidly declined. Their faces, back to their original selves through the grace of the Probability, were reverting back to the heads of the monsters once more.

[[… Hounds are coming.]]

Along with the 'Secretive Plotter's' declaration, all the kings from the 999th turns gathered in the centre. Those needing to exhaust an inordinate amount of Probability would invariably suffer greatly from the suspension of the donation.

The 'hounds chasing after the abyss' appeared amidst the incoming storm of aftermath and began biting into the kings' legs and arms.

[[Hey, it freaking hurts, you sons of bitches!]]

The 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon roared out.

Meanwhile, Yu Jung-Hyeok cut down the Constellations rushing in at us and shouted out. "Kim Dok-Ja!"

I looked up to the sky. The atmosphere up there was suspicious. This change wasn't as simple as a Myth-grade Constellation controlling the

weather. Something incredibly horrific that I had never experienced before was about to unfold here.

[Onsae, Heoche. Thank you for all your hard work until now.]

Two more Great Dokkaebis were being extinguished now.

「Great Dokkaebis were trying to end their story in this place.」

Hair rose up on my arms. I had never felt fear on this level during my time carrying out the scenario.

[Oh, the 'Most Ancient Dream'!]

The sky was opening up. I took a closer look before realising that it actually wasn't the sky, but the wall – the [Final Wall] that surrounded the entire universe.

And now, something was crossing over the gap in the Wall resembling a torn page.

「In that moment, Kim Dok-Ja intuitively foresaw the destruction of this world.」

My vocabulary was not good enough to adequately describe what that was. Just what was that?

It was like seeing a shoddy doodling drawn by a child and his pencil. That thing was at

once a gigantic sword, maybe a spear, or maybe even a missile.

What I knew for certain, though, was that an unknown something was falling in this direction.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu!

For the briefest moment there, I thought I saw something like

someone's 'hand' within the gap where that formless mass fell out from.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…!]

And now, only one thing was for certain – getting hit by that would kill us all.

「Kim Dok-Ja unleashed all of his Status.」

Every 'Great Fable' in my possession began their storytelling simultaneously. I quickly looked back at my companions.

"Everyone, we…!"

And right next second, my vision was dyed in pure white as a massive explosion of Probability blew up before our eyes.

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Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Bihyung quietly stared at the Great Dokkaebis melting into the scenario one by one.

Storytellers were becoming a part of the last scenario. As he stood there watching, both big and small lower-ranked Dokkaebis quickly rushed around him.

[Bihyung-nim! Just what is the meaning of…?]

The Bureau that had been maintaining a neutral stance until now began changing the entire aspect of the scenario through force.

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As a consequence, the topography of the Bureau was changing. The storages that contained Fables all broke down at the same time, and

those infamous Constellations currently under arrest by the Bureau's security force were being freed as well.

Bihyung stared at a certain Constellation right in the middle of this chaotic scene.

「The fool who never thought of himself as the protagonist.」

It had been the same story from the moment they first met. Even with a physical stat totalling less than 10, this guy didn't cower against a Dokkaebi like him. This guy, he often smiled to imply that he had plenty of leeway, and often carelessly got himself killed, too.

「The fool who knew the next part of the Fable even better than himself, the storyteller.」

Thanks to this guy's Fable, Bihyung got to grow his channel faster than anyone, and got to enjoy favourable assessments every time ranking evaluation came around.

「His Fable was now facing an end.」

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Having become a Great Dokkaebi, Bihyung could now tell what that heaven-splitting thing was. That thing had come from beyond the 'Wall'. That was the fragment of immeasurable delusion flying in from beyond the Wall that divided this world – the Wall that was both the First and the Final.

The ark could be seen now getting ready to soar. It seemed that the remaining Great Dokkaebis were planning to board the ark and escape from here.

Meanwhile, this stage would be annihilated with the descent of that fragment.

「In that moment, Dokkaebi Bihyung made up his mind.」

The remaining Great Dokkaebis, gathered in one place to perform the ceremony, realised Bihyung's intention and cried out. The first one to grab him was Baram.

[Bihyung! What do you think you're doing?!]

Bihyung didn't reply and stared at the ground below. The ones he'd been watching until now were down there.

Incarnations he sent his clone to speak with. And now, they were in the same place as he was. Bihyung looked at his own hands. His palms that used to be so small back then, were now as big as a grown adult male's.

[I've been observing that Fable for a very long time.]

Their first encounter wasn't all that positive; one of them was the culprit selling the tragedies called the scenarios, while the other had no choice but to carry those scenarios out while risking his life.

That was why Bihyung had to make a move now.

He had to do this one thing, since he had opened this tragic stage with his own two hands. This action had to be done if he wanted to remain as the 'storyteller' right until the end.

[Baram. You told me that there will come a time for every Dokkaebi to choose their own 'One Single Fable'.]

[You must listen to me, Bihyung! You're wrong this time! That Fable isn't right! That Fable, it's…]

Bihyung let go of Baram's hands and smiled.

He knew of a guy who always smirked just before dying. He couldn't understand it before, but now he thought he could figure it out. That guy must've been feeling this way, too.

[It's likely that I have grown to love that story.]

Bihyung then unleashed his own Status towards the Bureau's Great Dokkaebis.

Puh-gur-guhk!

The horn of Garang, working as the representative of the Great Dokkaebis and abusing the Bureau's powers of interference, broke off.

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The Probability controlled by the Bureau scattered away in an instant and a ripple effect suddenly occurred.

That storm of aftermaths came back to Bihyung in full. He turned around to leave while vomiting out his Fable that was changed to a pitch-black colour.

[Bihyung!! You dare to…!!]

More specifically, he stood in the way of the delusion's fragment falling towards the ground.

All the Fables he had recorded until now began crying. Every Constellation watching this storyteller added their own Probability to his action.

Bihyung began thinking as horrifying pain of the aftermath's storm tore into his body.

The protagonist of the Fable he had been reading wouldn't welcome his actions at all.

Because, that dude wanted to save everyone's life.

Even then, there was a certain rule that you couldn't go against.

「There is no story where no one was sacrificed.」

To protect the story, to guard the Probability, and to become the 'One Single Fable'

reaching the 「Final Wall」, this action had to be performed.

「Dokkaebi Bihyung had finally decided on his full stop.」

The 'Pah-su-sut' noise of something being pierced could be heard next.

He looked back and for a second there, he thought he saw Kim Dok-Ja's face.

[Your ■■ is 'sacrifice'.]

Fin.

The moment that dark, sinister irregular mass exploded in the sky, I grabbed the kids nearby and went down flat on the ground. Yi Hyeon-Seong spread out his steel wall, and the rough screeching metallic noises coming from above assaulted our ears.

How long passed by like that? Both the sounds and sensation of touch all disappeared.

[Transmission has been completed.]

And then, a puzzling message entered my head.

Muscles in my entire body ached as if I had been beaten up. Yi Hyeon-Seong's defensive barrier covering the sky was also gone, too.

…What on earth happened here?

I couldn't properly understand the current situation.

Scanning my vicinity revealed the fact that I was all alone. Not the kids I had been shielding, Yi Hyeon-Seong and Jeong Hui-Won

enveloping us, even Yu Jung-Hyeok leaping into the air to wield his sword – none of them could be seen.

What I could see, though, was a wide-open plain. I looked behind to discover a dense forest with trees reaching high into the heavens, and opposite it, a land filled with stinking sulphur.

「Great Dokkaebis exercised the Bureau's powers and interfered with the scenario.」

I could clearly remember that much. After that, the Bureau began restricting our Coin donations, and realising that that wasn't enough, they even summoned a strange missile-like thing, too.

And then, after that…

「[Ah, ah. Can you hear me now? Well, deary me. I ended up working extra because the Korean patch wasn't installed yet.]」

I felt this chilling sensation and quickly took a look around. A Fable could be heard coming from somewhere. And it was something I was intimately familiar with.

「[This is not a film shoot.]」

Something else popped up in the air right after that. It was a small shadow covering the sky the moment that dark, sinister summoned thing exploded.

I hurriedly scanned my surroundings.

「[This isn't a dream, it's not a novel, nor is it 'reality' that you people used to know.

You get it now? So everyone, shut your mouths and listen to me.]」

Definitely nearby. He was somewhere nearby, for sure.

Just how long did I wander around this plain for?

Eventually, I spotted him collapsed on the field of reeds.

"Bihyung."

I carefully picked him up. He used to be as big as a grown adult male after becoming a Great Dokkaebi, but now, he had shrunken back down to the size of a baby.

Just like on the first day that I met him.

"Bihyung!"

The starting point of all my tragedies.

If I hadn't met this guy, I'd have probably remained as a regular contracted worker for Mino Soft even now.

「[Hold on. Are you saying that you want to sign the with me??]」

If I hadn't signed the damn contract with this guy, I'd not have been able to come this

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far.

Crumbs of Fable fell from Bihyung's body. Their falling speed got progressively faster and faster.

「"Just what have you contributed to the 's Fable? Why are you shamelessly involving yourselves in their Coin compensations?"」

「"Aren't you fed up with such a story by now? For how long are you going to seek out Fables that conform only to the Bureau's standards?"」

Bihyung's Fables that I didn't know of were crumbling away.

I shook him again, trying to wake him up. I even resorted to smacking him in his cheeks, too. That prompted a frail voice to enter my ears.

“…That hurts. I'm beginning to pity Bawul you smacked around back then."

Bihyung opened his eyes and smiled bitterly.

He spoke not in the true voice, but in a trembling, faltering regular voice. It was Dokkaebi Bihyung's real voice, heard for the first time after such a long while.

A voice that I hated.

This bastard was responsible for turning people into Incarnations and spreading scenarios everywhere, changing this world into a kingdom of voyeurism. And that was precisely why I had to ask him.

"Why did you save me?"

The reason why Bihyung ended up in this state was because he touched the Probability he shouldn't have.

Just like those Great Dokkaebis being extinguished after forcibly interfering with the scenario, Bihyung too ended up in this miserable state by jumping headlong into the aftermath's storm he couldn't handle.

「Bihyung would die in this place.」

Fables I possessed began trembling.

This wasn't my plan. This wasn't the Fable I longed for.

['The 4th Wall' is violently shaking!]

Instead of a reply, Bihyung vomited out a mouthful of pitch-black

Fable. His body was getting smaller and smaller.

“…I'd like to sit up for a minute."

I helped Bihyung up.

The flights of stars could be seen in the cold night sky. Stars that went along this way and that according to the flow of the scenario. The flow of the distant stream of stars…

Bihyung was staring at the 「Star Stream」.

"I've transferred all of your companions. And the majority of the Constellations, as well as the Incarnations near you, should've survived as well. This place is safe from the external shocks."

"You…”

"You'll soon figure out the details yourself. You're a smart cookie, after all."

Several stars were falling in the sky. While I searched for words to say, the number of falling stars gradually increased.

Stars were dying in the distant 'context of constellations'.

Bihyung should have lived his life while dreaming the dreams of those stars.

"Kim Dok-Ja. You and I aren't comrades."

He must've enjoyed the stars' Fables, and must've watched their tragicomedies together. He must've witnessed the deaths of countless stars. And, on one hand…

"You are an Incarnation of the scenario, and I'm just a storyteller."

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…He must've thought that those deaths looked quite beautiful.

It was true that I hated Bihyung. I tried so hard to stoke the flames of that emotion.

[Fable, 'King of a Kingless World', is looking at its storyteller.]

[Fable, 'One Who Opposes the Miracle', grieves for its storyteller.]

[Fable, 'One Who Hunted the King of Disasters', mourns for its storyteller.]

My Fables scattered like fading screams and spoke to Bihyung.

He chuckled. With a proud face, no less.

"I actually wanted to witness your Fable till its end, though."

Beyond the skies he was looking at, was the 「Final Wall」. The dream Bihyung had been dreaming. The place where the king of all scenarios, the 'Dokkaebi King', resided.

I wanted to say something. I wanted to ask if he really was giving up here. Ask him if he had forgotten about the promise we made back then.

「"Dokkaebi Bihyung, sign the contract with me. If you do, I shall make you the king of all Dokkaebis.」

I still hadn't fulfilled that promise yet.

「He was the first reader of the Fable Kim Dok-Ja had compiled.」

My hands grew lighter. I slowly lowered my head, but Bihyung wasn't there anymore.

As befitting a damn storyteller, he made sure to leave behind his story even as he died.

I staggered back up to my feet.

「He wanted to create a Fable where no one had to be sacrificed.」

[Your great epic has encountered an opportunity to change!!]

Blood seeped out from my tightly clenched fists. All of my Fables were wailing out.

They screamed towards and at the [Final Wall].

「This story hasn't ended yet, Kim Dok-Ja.」

That was the dead Bihyung's Fable talking. The Fable he left behind moments before his death circled around me and was exhausting its own paragraphs.

Bihyung was dead, yet the Fable he left behind was still alive.

I somehow managed to get a grip on myself. Bihyung was right; the end I wanted to see had only just begun. I needed to find out where he had sent me, and where my companions had ended up in. And then…

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

The Probability's sparks were raining down in the middle of skies above the vast plains. And the scenes of the outside faintly revealed themselves beyond the storm of sparks.

The devastated stage of the final pages, the battlefield I was in only a few moments ago, was now filled to the brim with corpses of unmoving Constellations and Incarnations.

The moment I saw that, I figured out where I was.

[Welcome to the 'Final Ark'.]

This was inside of the 'ship' I was supposed to destroy.

[The 'Final Ark' is currently in the middle of the takeoff procedure.]

[Final scenario has been revised!]

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Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Destroy the Fable Core that powers the ark, and stop the world-line

migration plan of the Great Dokkaebis and Myth-grade Constellations.

Time limit: 24 hours

Reward: Final Wall

Failure: Destruction of the world-line.

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…So, that's how it was.

If this was indeed inside the ship called 'Final Ark', then it made sense to see such a world hiding within the craft.

This place I was standing in, it was the land of the beginning where countless myths were born. The myths that were currently asleep inside this very ark.

Ku-gugugugu…

Rough vibration could be felt coming from the opposite side of this land. Something was approaching here.

「Run, Kim Dok-Ja.」

The existences that recovered their original powers while carrying their worldviews on their backs – the Myth-grade Constellations were flooding in this way.

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「The ark is a type of a 'Great Fable weapon'. In order to completely

wreck the ark, you must destroy the Fable core deep inside it somewhere.」

I read the Fable Bihyung had left behind while running within the interior of the ark.

[You have currently infiltrated the residential cabin D-21.]

[The influence of another myth is far too strong within the applicable area.]

[Your Nebula's members can't be contacted currently.]

Maybe the abnormally higher influence of another Great Fable was to blame, because I couldn't get in touch with my companions. Fortunately enough, though, one other person from my group had been transferred into the same cabin as me.

[The influence of the same Nebula can be felt strongly!]

"Kim Dok-Ja!"

Just before I reached out and said something, Han Su-Yeong shouted out first.

"Shut up and run! Don't come this way!!"

The thicket behind her was cleanly sliced through right then. Something was chasing after her. She hurriedly yanked an item out from her inner pocket and threw that thing behind her – which was a smoke grenade.

['Mass-production SSS-grade smoke grenade' is activating its effects!]

[For next 20 seconds, the surrounding field of vision will be screened off!]

While the Constellations falling into confusion raised a noisy ruckus, we hurriedly escaped from the thickets. Han Su-Yeong seemed to have finished analysing the situation by now, too.

"Did that guy die?"

I didn't reply.

The heavily-panting Han Su-Yeong spat on the ground.

"That stinking Dokkaebi bastard. How could he even call this his final parting gift?"

Indeed, could anyone even call this a gift at all?

I looked up at the ark's ceiling. There should be countless owners of 'Great Fables'

besides us still sleeping inside this ship.

"Kim Dok-Ja."

"According to Bihyung's Fable, the Fable core is at the centre of the ark. We should be

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near its front section."

The moment I finished saying that, the true voices of Constellations rang out from the rising smoke screen.

[After them!!]

[They are still nearby! We can't head to the next world-line with them!]

Han Su-Yeong used the [Midday Tryst] to speak to me.

- Should we just kill them all?

That was an option, sure. However, the current battlefield wasn't ideal. This part of the cabin was actually another Nebula's worldview. Meaning, their own 「Stage Transformation」 was active in this location.

[The residential cabin D-21 is the location of the Universe Tree Yggdrasil's roots.]

Han Su-Yeong frowned deeply.

- Son of a gun. Why did it have to be ?

[Constellation, 'God of Harp and Horn', is performing the requiem of the apocalypse.]

[Constellation, 'One who Lost His Arm to the Wolf of Apocalypse', is searching for his disappeared arm.]

[Constellation, 'Thursday's Thunder', is overly emphasizing his mightiness.]

Constellations were flying around in the air searching for us. Most of them were Fable-grade, but…

-… Since when was Thor that powerful?

The 'Thursday's Thunder' condensed lightning on Mjolnir and stared at the sky, his eyes now in the shade of eerie blue. Thor was a Fable-grade Constellation. On this stage, however, he could unleash Status rivalling that of Zeus.

I addressed Han Su-Yeong.

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- We need to find a stage that's advantageous to us.

- Will there be such a thing in this place, though?

Unlike them, didn't really have anything in particular to call its worldview.

- There is one.

Even then, there should be one stage here where we could fight on equal footing. If my thoughts were correct, that was. If it was that place, then all of our other companions should also be able to exercise their full power, too.

The problem was with how to get there.

[Fable, 'Pebble and I', has begun its storytelling!]

Of course, there was that method, too. Han Su-Yeong's eyes grew wider.

[Fable, 'Pebble and I', is telling the story of 'We're just pebbles'!]

- What the heck is this?

I grasped her wrist and cautiously stepped in front of the Constellations like small pebbles rolling on the ground. As expected, they couldn't locate us at all.

[Constellation, 'Goddess of Love and Cats', is forming a depressed expression.]

[Constellation, 'Guardian of the Great Horn Bridge', is searching for someone.]

Han Su-Yeong saw all these Constellations failing to find us even though we were walking right past them, and her jaw dropped nearly to the floor.

- This is madness. What kinda dogshit cheat is this?

Sure, it was a cheat, alright. At a bare minimum, you wouldn't spot a 'pebble' unless you actually acknowledged the fact that there were some of them lying on the ground.

[A Constellation that likes to change gender is giggling away.]

It was then, a bad premonition entered my head. Even Han Su-Yeong was making a similar expression to mine.

However, we were almost there. Even if Loki had discovered our existences, the main forces of were far away now, so…

"Are you thinking of using that same method to escape this time?"

The Fable 「Pebble and I」 didn't work on those who had detected the actual form of the Fable itself. And unfortunately for us, I had used this Fable on a certain someone once before.

I slowly turned around to find an eye swirling in crimson light staring at us,

< Episode 94. Beginning of the end (4)> Fin.

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[Currently, BY-9158's picture transmission is in a temporary suspended state.]

Biyu must've done that voluntarily. It might be because of Bihyung's death, or maybe there was a problem trying to transmit from within

the ark itself. Whatever the case might have been, it was a good thing for us.

It'd been so much nicer if only the person before our eyes wasn't there, though.

"Anna Croft."

I stared at the prophet's blonde hair fluttering in the wind. I also sensed additional presences within the dense forest. They probably were the squad under her direct supervision, the 'Zarathustra'.

- Why isn't this pebble or rock or whatever not working on her?

I didn't reply to Han Su-Yeong. Didn't have enough time now to explain everything that happened in the 'Isle of Reincarnators', anyhow.

Rather than patiently wait for my answer, though, Han Su-Yeong simply gripped my wrist hard. And then, she pointed at Anna Croft with her free hand. Vicious licks of

[Black Flame] danced on the tip of her pointing finger.

"Move outta way or die."

Their gazes collided in the air.

Eerie, bluish ghostly aura permeated within Han Su-Yeong's irises as she activated

[Predictive Plagiarism]. At the same time, the eyes of Anna Croft, wielder of [Great Demon's Eye], also swirled in a crimson aura. Faint sparks danced in the air as the gazes of these two capable of reading the future collided.

The latter maintained this tense stand-off for a bit before opening her mouth. "Kim

Dok-Ja, do you want to escape from this floor?"

Han Su-Yeong's complexion changed colours and she growled unhappily. "Hey, you.

You ignoring me now?"

"I can help you."

"Weren't you trying your hardest to kill us not too long ago?"

As Han Su-Yeong's words came to an end, I sensed the movements of the Constellations in the surroundings. I even noticed a few that began destroying the terrain indiscriminately in order to locate us.

It would be hard to buy more time here.

"I didn't have a choice. If we sided with you back then, we'd all have been wiped away."

"And the current situation is different how?"

"Are you really going to waste your time this way? I'm pretty sure it's you people feeling the urgency, not me."

"Do we have a reason to trust you?"

"Are you the type to trust someone even with a good enough reason?"

In any other circumstances, I'd have gladly accepted her help. However, Anna Croft was someone who signed a direct contract with the whole Nebula.

"You're the Nebula 's Incarnation."

[Nebula, 's Great Fables are waking up from their ancient slumber!]

And the current floor just so happened to be the cabin where 's Constellations resided.

Anna Croft readily admitted to that and nodded her head. "True. I'm their Incarnation.

In that case, don't you find this even more strange? I'm right here, looking at you both, yet why haven't they rushed here yet?"

I too had been keeping an eye on the Constellations loitering around our vicinity. It looked as if they couldn't even hear our conversation. Quite likely, she resorted to some kind of an unknown method to block their gazes somehow.

"What are you scheming?"

I stared into Anna Croft's deep, mysterious eyes.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

「More than anyone out there, the Incarnation Anna Croft places importance in realistic causes.」

In a certain sense, this world's most righteous person could be none other than Anna Croft. If Yu Jung-Hyeok's cause was built upon rage and hatred, then Anna Croft's was built upon the foundation of righteousness.

The survival of the absolute majority.

Her aim was to safely preserve the city of her birth, Las Vegas, the United States of America, and on top of that, Earth itself during the hell of scenarios.

「However, America was destroyed during this world-line.」

Her home vanished on the same day that the great apocalypse began. All that remained were the small number of 'Zarathustras' following after her. Even then, her complexion wasn't as gloomy. No, her expression seemed to be filled with a certain fervour, instead. It was an expression of a person getting nearer to the world she wanted to see.

While feeling the gentle vibration spreading within the entirety of the ship, I opened my mouth. "You're thinking of taking over this ark, aren't you."

Right then, Han Su-Yeong next to me gasped out as if she had reached the same conclusion as me.

Anna Croft grinned refreshingly. "How wonderful it is that you're so quick on the uptake."

"It won't be easy to drive out the Constellations and take over the ark."

"However, it is the last chance given to humanity."

Her plan was quite clear.

The 'Final Ark' was a Great Fable weapon designed to transport Fable seeds to another world-line. If she managed to defeat the Constellations and acquire the controlling authority of this ark, then she should be able to transport humanity to a brand new world-line.

And everything would begin anew in that place.

"Not one Constellation can be left alive. Even if that includes you."

While listening to her, I recalled an ancient text from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「Anna Croft's ■■ is 'Perfect Night'.」

A world of darkness where not one starlight shined – Anna Croft wished for humanity to live freely again under that darkness. If it was the world she dreamed of, then my companions should be able to survive as well. I felt slightly lonely as I opened my mouth again.

"In that case, we'll be temporary allies. We'll work together until we reach the ark's core."

"Until then, I shall lend you the power of my [Precognition]."

Han Su-Yeong next to me sent a message in my direction.

- I've been checking her through Lie Detection, and she hasn't been lying. Doesn't look like she's been using Pokerface, either.

I nodded my head. "Alright. Let's work together."

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While going through the Fable Bihyung had left behind, I read the surrounding topography.

「The exit at the outside of the forested area is towards the branch reaching out to the

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heavens.」

One thing I realised while following after Anna Croft was that our current area was not a plain, but a 'floor' above a certain tree.

- Gotta admit, their worldview setting is pretty slick.

Han Su-Yeong muttered out, evidently impressed by the sight.

Seeing such a detailed recreation of 's worldview, I began to fully realise just how long they had been preparing this Final Ark.

This shouldn't be the whole Universe Tree Yggdrasil. It was probably a mock-up. Even then, this tree was more than wide and expansive enough already. Most likely, the

's Constellations would live on while enjoying the vested rights founded upon this Fable in the next world-line.

Anna Croft quietly stared at such Constellations, before shifting her head away and focused on the way ahead instead. Han Su-Yeong observed her and spoke to me.

- By the way, will she be alright? The price of betraying a Nebula

should be huge, though?

Before I could answer, though, Anna Croft opened her mouth first. "My situation is not something you should be concerned about."

"…What the hell. You can even eavesdrop on this?

"I only guessed that you were using Midday Tryst since you two haven't said anything for a while."

"Sounds like you have a trusty backer or something?"

Han Su-Yeong's words caused Anna Croft's expression to harden for the first time.

"What do you mean?"

"I was wondering if it's logically possible for a measly little Incarnation to block off the gazes from an entire 'Nebula', that's all."

Han Su-Yeong's right; no Incarnation could've pulled that off, regardless of who you

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were.

I quietly glared at the back of Anna Croft's head.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension's', concentration level is rising up even higher!]

I did have my suspicions. The aura of chaos gently crumbled away behind her. And beyond that, I thought I glimpsed a pair of crimson eyes not too dissimilar to Anna Croft's.

From the get-go, there were only two existences in this world capable of interfering with the channels Constellations watched.

Ku-gugugugu!

It was right then that lightning suddenly went off in the air. The ground split apart and the surrounding atmosphere began quaking ominously. The sounds of incoming storm could be heard next.

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Father', is slowly blinking its remaining eye.]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Anna Croft's complexion paled instantly.

Even the god of creation 'Ra' we fought back in the 98th scenario didn't possess might of this calibre. As for the Status, it easily exceeded Thor's we encountered earlier by a huge margin.

This worldview's most powerful being had just woken up from his slumber, in other words.

“…Odin."

We began running.

Even if had grown stronger, it was an act of utter stupidity to fight the Myth-grade Constellation Odin in 's turf.

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Father', is now looking at his world.]

A terrifying gaze was sweeping across the entire world. And not too long after that, I felt something was looking at us.

"It's this way! Hurry!"

There was a tree branch leading up to higher floors of Yggdrasil in the place Anna Croft was pointing at. We quickly ran on that branch and almost at the same time, the ground beneath our feet lost strength and began collapsing.

"Faster!"

I squeezed out every ounce of my energy and ran, and also activated the wind, as well.

[Exclusive skill, 'Way of the Wind Lv.???', is activating!]

All the Great Fables I've collected so far strengthened the Way of the Wind even more and it added greater momentum to our travelling speed. I wanted to activate [Demon King Transformation] as well and spread out my wings if it was possible, but one of the wings was wounded just before the transmission and I couldn't do that.

Du-dudududududu!

Some things was busy chasing us down.

[Constellation, 'God of Harp and Horn', is heeding the father's order.]

[Constellation, 'Goddess of Love and Cats', is answering the father's order.]

[Constellation, 'One Who Lost His Arm to the Wolf of Apocalypse', is howling out!]

[Constellation, 'Guardian of the Great Horn Bridge', has detected someone's presence!]

"We're almost there!"

Anna Croft turned around while saying that, and extended her hands out. Suddenly, the surrounding view changed and the field before her seemed to disappear. It was her speciality, [Phantom Barrier]. Constellations got lost in the darkness suddenly enveloping them and roared in surprise.

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Tsu-chuchuchut!

Anna Croft's eyes became bloodshot, before blood trickled down from her mouth and ears. It was the cost of going against her own Nebula. Even then, she didn't back down and shouted out.

"Iris! Selena! Lead the allies away!"

The two people running way ahead of us took 'Zarathustras' and ran towards the end of the branch.

"Run! Hurry! It's right in front of us!"

Anna Croft went down on one knee while bleeding profusely. She was in no shape to run by herself now.

"Han Su-Yeong."

Even before I was finished, Han Su-Yeong picked Anna Croft up and ran. It didn't take too long for us to reach the end of the branch. What waited for us there was a mysterious bridge emitting a rainbow of colours.

「It's the rainbow bridge leading to other floors, the [Bifrost].」

The fantastical bridge only seen within the myth was now laid out before my eyes.

Selena and Iris were already halfway across this very bridge.

I decided to activate [Lightning Transformation] and cross this thing in one go using the momentum. But then…

KWA-BOOOOM!!

I thought I saw a light flash in the heavens, and then, the centre of [Bifrost] was abruptly cut off. A massive spear that carved up the sky was being summoned back.

I instantly recognised what that spear was: the God-king Odin's weapon, Gungnir.

He chose to eliminate us here by cutting off the bridge leading to another world. I looked back at the group of Constellations hot on our heels and bit my lip.

We'd definitely be defeated if we choose to fight Odin in this place.

Ku-gugugugu!

In the end, the only answer here was to cross the bridge.

However, the width of the broken-off section was far too wide, and the storm generated by Odin was madly whipping about in the open gap. Even if I activated both

[Way of the Wind] and [Lightning Transformation] to their fullest, there was no guarantee of us crossing it safely.

Han Su-Yeong shouted out in frustration. "Hurry! Isn't there another way?!"

She forcibly shook Anna Croft, prompting the latter to reply helplessly while vomiting out blood.

"My Precognition… isn't perfect… But this time, I… saw clearly. Four people… crossing this bridge…"

Four people? I want to ask for clarification, but she had bled far too much and stopped speaking altogether.

But then, a certain scene popped up in my head.

「Kim Dok-Ja began thinking. 'Will it work?'」

However, there was no other path remaining. I looked up to the sky and was greeted by the deluge of indirect messages from the Constellations panicking from the channel's sudden upheavals.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', wishes to see the channel's broadcast!]

[Constellation, 'King Heungmu', complains about the channel's blackout!]

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is searching for the disappeared Kim Dok-Ja!]

"Biyu! Start the broadcast!"

"Wha?? Are you mad?!"

If we opened the channel now, every Constellation in the ark would learn of my current location. However, the thing I was planning to do would only work with the channel open.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Many Constellations are surprised by the screen spreading wide open!]

[A portion of Constellations realise that you're in danger and are freaking out!]

[A small number of Constellations feel an odd sense of deja vu at the current situation.]

I knew all too well what that deja vu the Constellations were talking about.

「A long time ago, there was an event where they had to cross a cut-off bridge.」

The 'deux ex machina' that activated on the broken Dongho bridge.

[The absolute majority of Constellations remember the situation from back then!]

[Nebula, 'Kim Dok-Ja Company's' Great Fables are shifting!]

Along with the gazes from the Constellations, the Probability began writhing wildly.

['Stage Transformation' is activating!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

['Deus ex Machina' is activating!]

The bridge that the Constellations created back then was being recreated right before our eyes.

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[Deus ex Machina – Even-numbered bridge]

Description: A bridge of light created by the blessing of a Constellation. Only the 'even'

number of people can cross it. When an odd number of people try to cross it, the bridge will be extinguished immediately.

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The even-numbered bridge – been a really long time since I last heard that name.

"Han Su-Yeong! Take Anna with you and run!"

"What???"

"Hurry up!"

I activated [Way of the Wind] on Han Su-Yeong and made her cross the bridge forcefully.

- Hey, you!! Eiii, shit! I don't know anymore…

I confirmed the distancing back of Han Su-Yeong before turning around. Constellations had begun emerging from Anna Croft's [Phantom Barrier] one by one already.

I unleashed my Status towards them while thinking to myself.

「The even-numbered bridge can only be crossed by an even number

of people.」

The distant Han Su-Yeong's voice and Odin's enraged roar entered my ear one after the other.

I unsheathed the [Unbreakable Faith]; I wasn't planning on dying in this place.

「Anna Croft said 'four people'.」

Just before I was about to unleash the electricity from the [Lightning Transformation]

on the incoming Constellations, a loud explosion occurred at the back of the attacking group.

Someone was ramming through the Constellations like a tank while running towards this way.

It was a familiar Fable; there was this one particular guy who got summoned to this floor only about a moment ago. His face revealed itself from beyond the rising murky fog of the Fable.

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- Keep running, Kim Dok-Ja.

The dude busy smacking all the enemies away and smashing the skulls of the Constellations, was busy dashing in this direction while carrying a scary light in his eyes.

I could only grin wryly. I didn't mind anyone else, but would've preferred not crossing the bridge with that guy.

- Hey, don't you throw me to the river this time, you bastard.

Fin.

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Yu Jung-Hyeok was running towards the bridge, while 's Constellations were chasing after him.

The Bald General of Justice shouted out. [Do your best, descendants!]

That prompted the One-eyed Maitreya to retort. [Your bald head is caked in sweat.]

[Worry about your own head first.]

[Aren't you going to help them?]

[I don't have an Incarnation, so how can I?]

[You can simply incarnate directly.]

[You must've lost your mind after being trapped here for too long. With the remaining Coins, it's impossible even to send a symbolic form down there.]

The Bald General grumbled unhappily and while wiping his head, looked behind him.

That's where the boring monotone-coloured training hall lied in wait.

The 92nd floor scenario location, the 'Infinite Sanctum'.

One could only escape from this place after clearing a total of ten separate trials. And several Historical Figure-grade Constellations, including the 'Bald General of Justice', have been trapped in here for

many decades.

The One-eyed Maitreya complained bitterly. [That damn Cheok family fool. What a terrible hardship this is all because of that man.]

The first one to sniff out this was the Goryeo's number one swordsman.

「If you're a true martial art practitioner, then you simply have to go there. The challenges are very easy, so you could say that place is more like an undiscovered, hidden candy.」

The next person to clear this scenario after Cheok Jun-Gyeong, the Maritime War God, said this:

「Indeed it is quite doable. You'll be accomplishing a great achievement by clearing it.」

The Historical Figure-grade Constellations that longed to reach the level of martial prowess attained by Cheok Jun-Gyeong and Yi Sun-Shin all headed to the 'Infinite Sanctum' after hearing those words.

And then, this was their sad state after several decades of failure.

[We've all momentarily forgotten that we are not the same as Cheok Jun-Gyeong or Yi Sun-Shin.]

Regardless of where or what, talent would always pose an issue.

The Bald General spat out one sigh after another.

The collision noises of weapons repeatedly rang out from the centre of the training hall.

[Are those idiots still fighting?]

The One-eyed Maitreya's lone eye shifted over to the location where

two old men were still duking it out. One was a tiger-like man with massive, rippling muscles, while his opponent was a fox-like man who enjoyed slim yet firm muscles himself.

Blinding shower of sparks exploded as two swords clashed in the air.

[Kim Yu-Shin! I'll definitely defeat you today!]

[Gyebaek, you're still no match for me.]

The 「Stage Transformation」 suddenly activated around them and the Hwangsanbeol's battlefield spread out. It was none other than the very same battlefield

Kim Dok-Ja had recreated in the past via [Ganpyeongui]

Kim Yu-Shin's Fragrant Dragon Flower Unit attacked Gyebaek, and the latter also unleashed his grandiose Status and crisscrossed the battlefield like a phantom.

It was indeed an amazing battle, but the other Historical Figure-grade Constellations simply looked on with bored expression on their faces. The 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' shook her head helplessly, while 'Founder of Hannamgun' tutted disapprovingly.

The One-eyed Maitreya sneered. [Even though they are showing off like that, they know the truth. They know that this isn't Hwangsanbeol.]

There should have been a time when they fought earnestly. There was this deep-seated grudge, the resentment that couldn't be resolved even with one's death, after all.

These two betted everything of themselves and fought in Hwangsanbeol. Such a thing definitely did happen.

[Fable, 'Sun Setting on Hwangsanbeol', is continuing with its

storytelling every now and then.]

The fastest thing to get shaved away after becoming a Constellation was their own

'Fable'. The more a Constellation depleted its story, the weaker its power would get.

They would grow bored, disinterested, fall into depression, or lose themselves in tedium.

Constellations would desperately seek out other Fables in order to escape from such a quagmire. In other words, they would search for a new tragedy to escape from this horrible eternal cycle, even if it was only for a brief moment.

Claaaang!

As the sounds of the weapons clashing got faster, 'Seo Ae One Stroke of Brush' spoke.

[Still, aren't they fighting a bit more spiritedly than before?]

[It seems that the fire's been rekindled after the 'Demon King of Salvation' summoned them back then.]

What the 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' said caused the Constellations to simultaneously shift their eyes over to the scenario channel. There they were, Kim Dok-Ja and Yu Jung-Hyeok crossing the bridge.

Han Su-Yeong had arrived on the other side and was busy shouting out.

- Kim Dok-Ja!! Faster!

The noisy clashings of weapons also ceased. Both Kim Yu-Shin and

Gyebaek stopped recreating Hwangsanbeol before anyone had noticed it and began holding their breaths. One by one, beings gathered around the display panel out of curiosity.

Several of them saw the bridge Kim Dok-Ja was crossing and pretended to know what it was.

[Hold on, isn't that the 'Even-numbered bridge'? How nostalgic.]

[What rubbish are you spewing now? You weren't even a subscriber back then.]

[Hmph…]

Odin was chasing after the fleeing Kim Dok-Ja and Yu Jung-Hyeok. The godly spear Gungnir, famed for never missing its target, was now taking aim at the former's back.

Not only that, the storm was growing stronger, gradually slowing down the duo's fleeing speed.

The One-eyed Maitreya shouted out. [What's this?! Odin, that guy is a Myth-grade Constellation, so what about saving his face…]

[Dok-Ja-gun is also a Myth-grade Constellation.]

[Are all Myth-grades the same?? Our Kim Dok-Ja is a still weak wet-behind-the-ears Myth-grade!]

As if to say their fight earlier was a lie, Kim Yu-Shin and Gyebaek sat side by side before the screen and shouted at the same time.

[It seems that the descendant was negligent in his training.]

[He might summon me again through Ganpyeongui. I should prepare for…]

[You think he'll call you, Gyebaek?? Obviously, he'll summon me when in that sort of a situation.]

When the hint of Hwangsanbeol being recreated showed itself again, the One-Eyed Maitreya quickly issued a stern warning. [Both of you, shut your traps and just focus on the screen.]

[Anyways, that man isn't going to throw Kim Dok-Ja again, I hope?]

Sparks were dancing around Yu Jung-Hyeok's right arm as he ran on the bridge. Just as Constellations began worrying, he suddenly grabbed Kim Dok-Ja by his collars with that arm.

[I knew it!! I bloody knew it…!!]

Yu Jung-Hyeok then powerfully threw Kim Dok-Ja forward, but also stepped onto the latter's back – and they began scything past the storm as if he was surfing the waves.

Right next second, the Gungnir thrown by Odin caused a massive explosion along with the blinding wall of light.

Kwa-aaaaaaah!!

When the light rescinded, only the debris of the destroyed bridge, [Bifrost], remained there.

[…What happened? Did they make it?]

The screen changed to display Kim Dok-Ja's group safely entering the next cabin.

[…Oh, oh. They made it!]

As if this event also concerned them too, the Korean Peninsula's Constellations looked at each other and celebrated. Even Gyebaek and Kim Yu-Shin awkwardly glanced at each other before lightly bumping fists. Unfortunately, their happiness couldn't last for long.

- Chase after them.

Because, the 's Constellations began moving after the enraged Odin issued

the order.

「 will not be able to escape for long. 」

Everyone here understood this fact. Even if this was Kim Dok-Ja they were talking about, he still shouldn't be able to escape for long from the large Nebulas in such a disadvantageous stage.

Not only that, the channel had been opened publicly again, so other Nebulas in the ark should start aiming at as well.

As a heavy silence descended on the group, someone muttered out in resignation.

[I guess it'll be difficult this time…]

[Honestly, that friend should've died a long, long time ago.]

That prompted several Constellations to nod their heads.

Kim Dok-Ja's life so far had been a series of miracles. Back when he fell below the Dongho bridge, back when he destroyed the [Absolute Throne], when he became the

'Demon King of Salvation', or even when he went to the 1863rd turn – he should've died many times over.

When he appeared as the 'Outer God King', every single Constellation thought that he'd definitely die for real this time.

「 The Incarnation who was stuck in a much lower scenario than them only a few years ago. 」

And now, Constellations were watching the back of Kim Dok-Ja striding forward in the scenario way ahead of theirs. Some watched with envious eyes, while some, contempt at themselves. Everyone wanted to say something, but no one dared to open their mouth.

The first one to speak was Gyebaek. [I once overheard the Shindansu's prophecy in the past. This world-line can supposedly become the final world-line.]

No one could predict how far could go.

No one knew just where they would end up, or what kind of ■■ they would witness.

Maybe, they might not even reach the end of this world like so many had predicted, and come to a dead stop.

Gyebaek grasped his greatsword and slowly got up from the spot. His glare was now locked on the portal in the centre of the training hall. That was where the final trial of the 'Infinite Sanctum' was.

Kim Yu-Shin asked him. [Could you perhaps be planning to challenge it? You might really die this time.]

[If I die, then this place is my ■■.]

Gyebaek's reply caused Kim Yu-Shin to grin. [Our ■■ is Hwangsanbeol.]

While cracking his neck muscles, Kim Yu-Shin also stood up from his spot.

The third person to stand up was the Bald General of Justice. [I shall challenge it again as well.]

His eyes containing his resolution seemed to shine brightly.

That prompted several other Constellations to stand up as well – the 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade', 'Founder of Hannamgun', 'Seo Ae One Stroke of Brush', and…

[I hope that you all haven't forgotten that time when we almost got slaughtered while attempting it as a party.]

The One-eyed Maitreya's words caused everyone's complexion to grow gloomy. They kept failing to break past the last gateway of this

scenario until now.

[However, we can't go and aid them if we don't break through that trial.]

The thing was, the final pages of the 'Infinite Sanctum' couldn't be cleared with so few participants. It was just that the one-man-army Cheok Jun-Gyeong and Yi Sun-Shin leading an armada were freaks of nature, that was all. If only there were handful more Constellations here…

It was then, a bright light exploded in the corner of the sanctum.

[Someone is entering the 'Infinite Sanctum's' tenth floor!]

The One-eyed Maitreya's complexion brightened as he shouted out. [Oh?! There are newbies incoming?]

Two beings revealed themselves from the receding light.

A short while later, the One-eyed Maitreya's jaw dazedly slackened after realising who these two were. One was a very big person, while the other was very small.

The first one to speak was the smaller figure.

[It's just as Cheok Jun-Gyeong has said. You all are still stuck here? What a bunch of pathetic fools.] Kyrgios spat out as vicious fighting spirit oozed out from his body. [My disciple might die because you lot have been meandering about.]

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As the rays of light shattered simultaneously, both Yu Jung-Hyeok and I got sucked into the worldview's exit. When I regained my wits, I found myself being trampled by his feet.

"I told you not to throw me!!"

He must've found stepping on my back rather unsanitary, because he began lightly dusting his combat boots.

Han Su-Yeong waiting for us quickly approached us. Judging from her expression, she must've been planning to give me another earful. Whether it was a fortunate thing or not, though, Anna Croft opened her mouth first, instead.

"I had no idea you'd utilise the Stage Transformation in that manner. Honestly, I'm somewhat impressed, Demon King of Salvation."

Han Su-Yeong shifted her glare to Anna next. "Didn't you see all this through your

[Precognition]?"

"I did see people crossing the bridge, but I had no idea that it'd be that kind of a bridge."

"What a complete rip-off you are."

I ignored these two's bickering and scanned our new surroundings. The corridors resembling a tree branch's vascular bundle stretched out in all directions.

It seemed that this was the corridor of the 'Final Ark'. I couldn't see the 'Zarathustras'

that entered here before us anywhere, though.

Anna Croft closed her eyes and felt for something for a bit, before opening her mouth.

"It seems that everyone has scattered in different passageways. Fortunately, no one has lost their lives yet."

"Our companions seem to be safe too," said Yu Jung-Hyeok, and I nodded my head.

[Influences of other myths will be weaker in the applicable location.]

[Nebula, 's connection is being established again!]

Now that we were outside the 's worldview, I could start detecting the Fables of my companions a little bit. I sensed that they had been scattered here and there.

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', is letting its existence known!]

I strongly emitted my Fable in order to gather my companions in one place. If it was them, they should be able to locate me without too much fuss.

Boooom!!

Meanwhile, a chain of explosions rocked out from the 's exit we closed shut behind us. Some people were trying to open the door and come out. It was obvious who they were.

"Let's continue moving."

Fin.

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We avoided the 's Constellations and ran in the complicated network

of the passageways.

[Constellation, 'One Who Lost His Arm to the Wolf of Apocalypse', is sniffing out the scent of blood.]

[Constellation 'God of Harp and Horn's' musical notes are hovering near your ears.]

[Constellation, 'Progenitor of the Reincarnators', is tracing your soul!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Abydos', declares that you won't get lucky the second time!]

While some Constellations cheered us on through the channel, there were others chasing us down through the view from the channel, too. These stars bared their murderous intentions from beyond the tall walls of their own worldview the moment our location had been revealed.

There was a reason why we hadn't been caught yet, and that would be because our group consisted of us four.

"We should not go to the right. I'm getting a bad premonition from there."

We trusted in Anna Croft's hunch and changed our direction. She might be our enemy, but in times like this, she also happened to be the most reliable ally, as well.

Forks in the road continued to appear.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

"Odds of death going to the right, 92%. 44% to the left. Keep going forward!"

Han Su-Yeong shouted out while reading through countless cliches in her head.

"What are the odds of survival when going forward?"

"I don't know!"

She shot me a glare and ran in front of us.

"Coming from above."

This hunch was coming from none other than the protagonist himself. Yu Jung-Hyeok continuously fired off [Breaking the Sky Sword Aura]; Constellations screamed as they were struck by the pre-emptive attacks and collapsed on the passage's floor. I thought I could hear intermittent noises of [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] cutting down some things.

"Continue running."

I abruptly realised the reason why the four of us had been gathered like this.

「These four were most likely to clear this scenario safely.」

One of us was a prophet, the other one was a writer, and another one was a regressor.

As for the last person…

"Stop here."

My words caused the companions to stop immediately. All three of them were looking at me; I glanced back at them and slowly approached the cabin before us.

Anna Croft grabbed my shoulder. "… You aren't planning to enter this cabin, I hope."

Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't say anything.

I looked back at my companions and addressed them. "Passing through here is the only way."

"Can't you see what's written on the door of that cabin??"

No, I could see it very well. And at the same time, I could also very well sense the enormous Statuses of the Constellations right behind us,

too.

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「In order to reach the location I want, we must cross 's worldview.」

According to the Fable left behind by Bihyung, we had no choice in the matter. It was rather obvious that Zeus, having tasted humiliation outside, would never let us pass.

"Odin behind, and Zeus in front," said Yu Jung-Hyeok as he stepped forward. "If we break through here, we'll have a method to fight against them?"

"Yes, definitely."

We sensed Odin's Status right behind us now.

Han Su-Yeong shouted out. "Dammit, in that case, hurry up and open it! Those bastards are almost here!"

We kicked the 's door down and jumped in. Felt as if something was powerfully sucking us in, and when I regained my wits, we were busy walking in the skies above itself.

The immense sky castle of could be seen in the distance.

[Nebula, 's Constellations have confirmed the identities of the intruders!]

The atmosphere grew stifling; thunderclouds gathered in no time at all and covered up the sky.

[Constellation, 'Throne of Lightning', is exercising his influence on the entirety of

!]

's king was now waiting for us. As well as the 12 gods guarding his sides, too.

[Constellation, 'Almighty Sun', is mobilising his chariot!]

[Constellation, 'Atrocious War God', is lifting his sword!]

[Constellation, 'Pure Hunter of the Moonlight', is nocking an arrow!]

Below us on the ocean, we could see the mythical monsters waiting for us, too.

[Constellation, 'Monster of the Labyrinth', is howling in your direction!]

[Constellation, 'Fairy that Sings About Death', is singing about your death!]

Everything in this worldview was our enemy.

Ku-rurururu!

"Move!!"

My [Way of the Wind] and Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Air Walk] activated simultaneously.

Anna Croft's [Way of the Storm Winds] and Han Su-Yeong's [Dark Clouds Big Dipper]

followed us right afterwards. We crossed the sky with the fastest speed we could bring out.

Meanwhile, the thunderclouds took on an even more ominous vibe.

[Demon King of Salvation!!]

The 12 gods stuck very close to our rear.

Ares's greatsword sliced the air and descended upon us. I swung my [Unbreakable Faith] and blocked the attack just in time. Along with the noise of 'Kwa-du-duk!', it felt as if every joint in my body was collapsing; it was like being crushed by a tank, actually.

This was the true might of the 12 gods now carrying their own worldview on their backs.

I unleashed Status from my entire body and spoke in true voice. [Do not take us lightly, Ares.]

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is screeching out!]

I wasn't sure about anyone else, but at the least, I'd not lose to Ares. Because, I already possessed a Fable of winning against him.

[Fable, 'One Who Defeated the God of War', has begun its storytelling!]

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Unfortunately, our situation had already run into serious problems.

The 'Pure Hunter of Moonlight' Artemis was pouncing on Han Su-Yeong wrapped in

[Black Flame], while Yu Jung-Hyeok flying in the air was already engaged in an intense battle against 'Spokesperson of Justice and Wisdom' Athena.

Anna Croft, situated at the lowest place among us, was beset by 's lower-ranked Constellations.

[I used to cheer you on, Kim Dok-Ja.]

A voice came from behind me.

That was from the fastest Constellation in this sky. The motifs of wings could be seen on his shoes.

[Unfortunately, you shouldn't have come here.]

It was the 'Master of Skywalk', Hermes.

He looked at me with a genuinely rueful expression and spoke. [My father, he's been truly angered.]

And then, the thunderclouds glowing brightly until then finally exploded; everything seemed to enter slow motion. It felt like the view of the sky was melting down slowly.

The lightning seemed to blanket the entire world. None living within this worldview would be able to dodge Zeus's wrath.

Han Su-Yeong was looking in this direction, shouting something. I silently mouthed the following to her.

'It's alright.'

I slowly sucked my breath in and focused my mind. Ares was smiling triumphantly as if the battle had been decided already. I ignored him and raised my sword up high like a lightning rod.

KWA-BOOM!!

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The thunderclap of the sky gathered towards me. This Status threatened burst all of my Fable veins in one go. However, I endured it. More specifically, the darkness wavering about near the tip of my hand was sucking in Zeus's thunderbolt.

An indescribable scream exploded out from my mouth.

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is growling!]

My vision was dyed in red, and Fable began flooding out from my mouth.

Pah-chuchuchuchu…!

Zeus then unleashed an even greater amount of Status.

I couldn't endure anymore. My powerless body began falling from the air.

「And now, it's done.」

[This is the end, Demon King of Salvation. Even if it's you, in our 'worldview', you are!]

My helplessly falling body after being struck by the thunderbolt suddenly stopped in the air. The [Unbreakable Faith] almost slipping out of my grasp was gaining some strength. Next up, Ares's frozen-stiff expression could be seen. The expression of the God of War, who'd never submit to fear, was filled with emotions of terror.

「Someone was holding Kim Dok-Ja's sword together with him.」

It was a very large and sturdy hand. A true voice akin to the noble night being carved rang out vividly.

[Why do you think this worldview is yours alone?]

The gentle yet deep darkness embraced my falling body.

[How boundlessly arrogant you are, Ares.]

The night swallowing up the thunderbolt began spreading in the heavens.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is incarnating into the 'Final Ark'!]

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[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is incarnating into the 'Final Ark'!]

Indeed, 's myths weren't Zeus's alone. The reason why their shining daylight could become 'myths' in the first place was because the night existed to call them the day.

['Underworld' is manifesting onto the ground above!]

A world sleeping in the deepest part of the underground was now waking up.

[Hades…!]

The King of Underworld set me down on the ground and spoke calmly towards the sky. [It's time to settle this, my ancient brothers.]

Hades's scythe raised up to the sky screeched out, causing the darkness of the underground to pour out towards the heavens like the waterfall flowing in reverse.

It was the Underworld's army. When the Judges issued the order to advance, the guardian of 's underbelly, Cerberus, roared out viciously.

[You lowly creatures from the underground dare to-!]

Heroes of this worldview crossed their swords. More heroes aboard the Argos entered the battlefield next.

The great army belonging to Zeus and the 12 gods was truly immense. Judge Aeacus collided against Hephaistus, while Cerberus and Minotaur began ripping into each other.

Soldiers from the forest symbolising Artemis rushed in. The 'Wise Astrologer' Chiron's hooves trampled on the Underworld's army.

[No matter how deep your night is-!]

It was then, Chiron's head flew off into the sky.

Monsters crawling out from the underground used their huge fingers to rip off his head and began chewing on it.

[Ze-u-s-!!]

Voices of unfathomable sorrow and resentment resounded out. I knew their owners pretty well.

「And so, 's final began in this fashion.」

The titans, Gigantes; every single titan, having spent all those sorrowful years huddled underground, started revealing their figures under 's night.

Not only that, monsters boasting physiques several times larger than these Gigantes rose up as well. They were beings that I ran into some time ago back in the

's prison.

[All titans of purgatory are looking up at 's sky.]

The three brothers of Hecatoncheires – the hundred-hander titan Briareus that fought alongside me back in the spoke to me.

[We have finally come this far, child.]

One of Briareus's hands lightly brushed past my head.

[This battlefield is for you.]

The titans challenging the heaven's authority stood up while stepping on the night.

Their roars shook the skies of , their Statuses mighty enough to threaten Zeus's throne.

And in the centre of this battlefield, Zeus was fighting fiercely against Hades. The collision of these two Myth-grade Constellations caused the pitch-black night and day to intermingle, and the world's time and space collapsed.

Persephone commanding the Underworld's army addressed me directly.

[Now, go. Do not ever look back. Go, and witness the end you wish to see.]

I nodded and raised my tottering body up. I swallowed the [Life and Death Pill] Yi Seol-Hwa gave me, and all of my fried nerves began recovering bit by bit. I unsteadily walked forward in the battlefield where flesh got torn apart and blood was raining

down.

Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok, plus Anna Croft, stood there waiting for me, having broken past this scene of pure pandemonium earlier.

Han Su-Yeong ran up to me and supported my figure. I looked behind and saw the corpses of heroes, their eyes still wide open; the stars that fell from the skies; Fables that would not be told anymore, were now looking at me with resentful eyes.

「This was the path I had chosen.」

I knew this would happen from the beginning. It was obvious that the Underworld would make their move if I came here.

For the sake of ■■ that I desired, I used all of their Fables.

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is crying out!]

We could see the exit of in the distance. That was where we had to go.

However, there was a Constellation blocking our path.

I had to ask him why. "Dionysus, are you going to stop us?"

The 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', Dionysus leading his congregation was looking straight back at me. He must've downed several bottles of booze already, because his cheeks were quite obviously flushed red.

He stared at me with drunken, unfocused eyes, before opening his mouth while gripping the wine bottle. [All of you, step aside.]

The words of the master prompted the Bacchus's fanatic believers to make way. And we walked on that path. The Siren's song and Orpheus's musical performance could be heard wafting in from somewhere. Also, I heard the sound of someone I knew dying among them, too.

「Kim Dok-Ja didn't look back.」

My view shook as if I was intoxicated, too.

Yet, we walked and walked some more. Eventually, we reached 's exit.

Dionysus was right behind us. If I look back, I should be able to see his expression filled with sorrow. He was a Constellation who really liked our story.

[Kim Dok-Ja. My has no place in the conclusion you're heading to, right?]

I couldn't reply.

「"That's because I like your story."」

The one who had been watching my Fable for a very long time, and rescued me many, many times in the past.

「"Several Constellations including me believe that you're the one capable of reaching

■■."」

I was about to look back, but Dionysus spoke to me first.

[It's been fun, oh the great, noble star.]

I heard the sound of a world closing behind me.

My feet didn't want to move. I stood there for a long time without

saying anything, and eventually, someone addressed me.

"It's not over yet."

We began walking towards the darkness of the ark.

Our destination was right before us.

Fin.

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After exiting from , we remained silent for a long while. We either ran or walked; we ran, and then ran some more. Only the hollow screams could be heard in the starless emptiness.

Would those screams be recorded as Fables, too? And would someone else listen to them later? Just how many more Fables need to repeat themselves before this world came to an end?

"Kim Dok-Ja."

"I know."

The voice coming from Han Su-Yeong still supporting me helped me to get a grip on myself.

Eventually, the doorway to the cabin I was searching for could be seen in the distance.

Even this far, the door looked much smaller and shabbier compared to other cabin's.

The corridor we went past earlier was getting noisier. Constellations from different factions were colliding and making those noises. I didn't hesitate and pushed the door open.

[You have entered 'Prop Storage'.]

"What's this? What's this shabby…"

Han Su-Yeong's utterances came to an immediate stop after she clapped her eyes on the room's interior.

The room so big that eyes couldn't see the end of, white sheets covering many places within it; if one were to designate this place as the 'prop storage', then it'd surely be biggest in the known universe.

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「The cabin where 'scenario's everything' had been gathered.」

Bihyung's Fable could be heard next.

「All the props that had been used in various scenarios are displayed there. From consumable items to the scenario's main rewards, and even Star Relics from the Nebulas that lost their power.」

The 'mucus of the Hammer Seahorse' and the 'thorn of the Stonehawk' I used to hunt the water dragon were also in here.

Back then, I thought I was really going to die, but… Seeing them like this made me reminisce about my past.

"Not bad. Some of them are still fairly useful."

Yu Jung-Hyeok had strode over to the props even before I had noticed it and began exchanging his equipment. He sprayed the Fable metal coating on his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]'s blade, swapped out

his coat with a new one, and even chucked away his ancient combat boots for a new pair before picking up several Star Relics.

Seeing how his eyes were sparkling so dangerously like that, he must be feeling very pleased with himself right now.

"Wha? 'Still fairly useful'?? I haven't even seen some of these before! Let's quickly grab some and bounce."

Han Su-Yeong too had dived into the piles of items by then, and hurriedly picked the stuff she could use. Even Anna Croft, lucky enough to be supported by a wealthy Nebula until recently, bent down and carefully went through the items on display.

Like a group of unremarkable Incarnations that stumbled onto the scenario's hidden piece, we sought out items, exchanged our equipment, and shared happy grins with one another.

「They all knew, however. If they didn't do this, they wouldn't be able to endure this moment.」

Yet another noise of explosions rang outside the room.

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It sounded much closer than before.

“…So, what's in the next room, then?"

Was it because of fatigue? Han Su-Yeong had stopped [Predictive Plagiarism]'s story for now. Our gazes met and for a moment there, she raised the corner of her brow slightly.

「"You think writers enjoy writing stories all the time?"」

I could understand the meaning behind her grin now.

Even if the world was destroyed, even if the scenario barrelled towards tragedy, she'd remain as a writer, always. And that was why

it was so much more painful for her. All those different pains yet to be described must still be inside her head even now.

「And that was why only him, the 'reader', could make this choice.」

"No, we'll make our stand right here."

「A choice that only the one filled with greed and obstinacy to see the desired ending could make.」

Han Su-Yeong erupted in anger. "We weren't going to destroy the core??"

"If we are to reach the core, we need to go through other worldviews of large Nebulas."

"Can't we just go around or something?! Like, if we exit through that door-!"

Han Su-Yeong pointed to a plain door visible in the corner of the room.

"That door will take us to ."

"What about that one…"

"That door is connected to ."

"Son of a…"

Han Su-Yeong freaked out, and as she distanced herself from the door, she made sure

to place the locks on them.

The explosion noise rang out once more. Heavy vibrations resounded

out, and someone began pounding on the cabin's door. Along with the sounds of some things exploding, the cabin's walls shook about violently.

“…They are right before us, it seems," said Anna Croft.

Han Su-Yeong scowled deeply and began massaging her forehead.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has resumed its storytelling!]

In the end, she had to reactivate her Fable. Plot developments she didn't want to predict were probably being drawn inside her head.

Both Anna Croft possessing [Precognition], and Yu Jung-Hyeok and his ability to read the patterns after living through countless regressions, began getting ready to fight as well.

"We need to fight in this place. This is the only room where we have any hope of victory."

Every cabin within the 'Final Ark' contained the recreation of large Nebula's worldview.

「However, there was one location in this ark where no worldview had been recreated.」

And that was none other than this 'Prop storage', where items to be used in various scenarios were stored away.

[Applicable cabin isn't under the influence of any worldview.]

That was the reason why I chose this room as our battleground.

"They are here."

The moment Yu Jung-Hyeok unsheathed the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], the doors in all four sides burst open simultaneously. Constellations began flooding in through the doorways next.

[Constellation, 'Master of December 25th', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'One Responsible for the Universe's Rotation', is joining the battleground along with its servants!]

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[Constellation, 'Master of Abydos', is incarnating in rage!]

[Constellation, 'Official in Charge of Earthquakes and Volcanoes', is waking up from its ancient slumber!]

[Constellation, 'Ruler of Inhalation and Exhalation', is waking up its Fables!]

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[Constellation, 'One-eyed Father', is fixing his grip on his spear.]

[Constellation, 'One Who Lost His Arm to the Wolf of Apocalypse', has discovered you!]

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[Constellation, 'Great Mother God Who Created Man Out of Earth', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'Daeracheonjon', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'Emperor of Heavens', is sitting on his throne!]

[Constellation, 'Master of the Three-Pointed Double-Edged Spear', is taking out all of his paopeis!]

…And even , too.

The moment all the doors of the storage broke down, Fables within the space collided and expanded. The 'Great Fables' from differing worldviews were letting their voices heard loud and clear.

Han Su-Yeong chuckled. "Everyone who hates us has gathered in one spot."

[Over there!]

Just as someone shouted that out, we quickly retreated to the back; along with a loud explosion, jet-black ash danced in the spot we'd been standing on a moment ago.

['Great Fables' have discovered a new cabin!]

[Portion of Fables have begun transplanting their worldviews to the new cabin!]

We didn't have much time here.

Kwa-boooom!!

Explosions rang out as we unsheathed our individual weapons. I too had already kitted myself out from head to toe in all sorts of props from various scenarios.

With our backs pressed against each other, we faced the four cardinal directions and unleashed our Statuses towards the incoming Constellations.

Han Su-Yeong fired out [Black Flame] and flung herself forward. "All of you, just die!!"

A pitch-black sphere she threw flew in the air and landed amidst the Constellations. I wondered what that was, only for a stonking flame wave to explode out from the item.

[Kuwaaaaaah!!]

I instantly recognised what that was. That was the 95th scenario's reward item called

[Nightmare Flame Wave] from the 241st regression turn. It was a horrifying Fable weapon containing flames dragged out from 's hell that unleashed perpetual flames in the area of effect for the next ten or so years.

[Measly flames from a destroyed Nebula dares to…!]

Along with 'Fuuu-!' noise, Nuwa's soil created a path in the middle of the conflagration.

The 's Constellations ran on that road and pounced on us. Some of them happened to be the same lot that fought against us back during the Journey to the West.

Han Su-Yeong noisily gritted her teeth. "They managed to show up here, yet why haven't you come yet, Black Flame Dragon!"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', shouts out that you must wait for a little

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bit longer!]

The number of Constellations entering through the doors easily surpassed a couple of hundreds – three hundred, four, five… every Constellation found in the worldviews were now streaming into this huge room.

And as their numbers continued to grow, the effects of the 「Stage Transformation」

grew stronger in the middle of them. The once-colourless floor morphed into the desolate desert and a massive pyramid suddenly rose up from there.

The 'Master of Abydos', Osiris spoke up. [I was wondering who managed to wake me up, but this…]

Right afterwards, clouds gathered in the sky above and the panoramic view of the heavenly worlds spread out.

The 'Great Mother God Who Created Man out of Earth' Nuwa spoke to us next. [It's not too late, children. I can make spots available for you all.]

[On whose authority?]

I thought I could hear the trumpeting of elephants, only to realise that it was the

'Master of December 25th' Mithra riding atop the head of a gigantic turtle speaking up.

[Only punishment fitting for those rejecting the 'celebration day for my revival' is death.]

Odin sitting on the edge of the Universe Tree's branch stared at me with the eye capable of seeing through all things in creation.

[Oh you foolish star, did you honestly believe you can fight against us all?]

A loud burst of laughter could be heard; all the stars, their Great Fables already secured within this safe 'ark', were laughing at us.

[With a Fable that hasn't even reached 'myth' level yet, how dare you…]

The 'Bird that Devours Thunder' tried to throw some third-rate utterances in our direction, but then, its mouth suddenly emitted 'Puh-shoo-shuk' noise before being

cleanly penetrated from behind.

Yu Jung-Hyeok had somehow appeared behind the creature's back and cut the fool's head off right there and then.

"You talk too much."

[Kill them!]

The battle commenced. We were overwhelmingly outnumbered, but

we aggressively utilised the nearby props to their fullest in our fight. Fable weapons we could rely on were scattered about all over the place. Especially for the weapon storage for the 60th scenario, which seemed to be designed solely with Yu Jung-Hyeok in mind.

[Comrade, 'Comrade of Life and Death', has begun its storytelling!]

[Comrade, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

Yu Jung-Hyeok's talents displayed earlier during the 'Demon King Selection' battles were now shining brightly.

He was the 'all-rounder'; he mastered handling every type of weapons out there while living through 1863 regression turns, and now, he was massacring Constellations with a great bow.

[Kill him first!]

Historical Figure-grade Constellations were sniped to death by Yu Jung-Hyeok's rapid firing, and the debris falling from the dying stars created protective walls. We ran between them and continued to fight.

"Dodge to the right!"

Almost at the same time as Anna's warning rang out, a rapid attack from the Myth-grade Constellation swept by near our heels. Avoiding fatal injuries after getting struck by such attacks would be quite difficult; the stock of Yi Seol-Hwa's [Life and Death Pills] had almost run out by now, so we weren't able to deal with serious wounds anymore.

Lower-ranked Constellations of Asgard pounced on Anna Croft.

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[How dare you betray our Nebula??]

Splat!

The head of the Constellation roaring out exploded, just like that. A lengthy tongue-like thing flew out from behind Anna Croft and burst open that Constellation's head.

[Constellation who likes changing gender is smirking.]

The backer that helped her betray the Nebula was now helping us, too.

"Kim Dok-Ja! Holding out any further will be impossible! Yu Jung-Hyeok's reached his limit, too!"

The attentions of the Myth-grade Constellations were focused on Yu Jung-Hyeok; the weapon storage was burning in flames, while he was swinging a huge hammer around to ward off the Constellations, his whole body bathed in blood.

「Kim Dok-Ja began rummaging through the Prop storage to find something.」

"…Found it."

I picked up a test tube located at the very end of the [Star Relic] category. This was written on the label stuck to the tube: [Shindansu's seed].

I unhesitantly dropped that seed on the floor. It quickly sprouted a new bud and in a blink of an eye, grew into a tree as tall as me. But it stopped there.

[Great Fable, 'Shindansu', is spreading its roots!]

[Great Fable, 'Shindansu', is perceiving your existence.]

[Great Fable, 'Shindansu', requires a Fable for the sake of Gaecheon(開天)!]

The whole prop storage was now up in flames.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was holding up pretty well until now; Constellations looking into his venomous eyes freaked out and yelled at each other.

[This is the 'Prop Storage'! Use items to fight him off!]

The first thing they found was an item we were quite familiar with as well – the

[Absolute Throne]. The core item of the fourth scenario that granted anyone acquiring it with the Outer God's blessing.

The Historical Figure-grade Constellations discovering the throne rushed towards it with greed-filled eyes.

I stopped Han Su-Yeong from rushing there too. "Let them be."

The Historical Figure-grade Constellations swarmed towards it.

[The throne is mine!]

The moment someone stepped on the [Absolute Throne], I clutched the [Shindansu]'s leaf. No matter how hard I pondered it, the Fable that I could afford to feed this guy had to be this one.

A portion of Constellations felt something was off and hurriedly shouted at the

[Absolute Throne].

[Wait!! Stop!]

Just as the Status leaking out from the [Absolute Throne] was about to flood in this direction, something buried deep inside my chest began to writhe.

[Fable, 'King of a Kingless World', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Shindansu', has detected the beginning of a new Fable!]

「This story began by destroying that throne.」

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!!

The [Shindansu] gobbled up the Fable and acquired the explosive amount of Probability, allowing it to grow larger again.

[A new worldview is taking root in the applicable location!]

「Shindansu」. The large Nebula 's Great Fable.

I addressed the Constellations. "As you have said, we don't have a 'myth'. However, we have always been fighting together with a certain 'myth'."

And that Fable began telling its story.

「No other myths could escape from this story.」

The [Shindansu] instantly reached up to the storage's ceiling and massive explosion noises resounded out next. The ark's ceiling began collapsing.

[Gaecheon(開天) is commencing!]

The heavens started opening up as powerful whirlwinds swirled around.

[Aged stars of an ancient Nebula are waking up from their endless slumber!]

Accompanied by the blinding rays of light, shadows of tree branches in full bloom were cast on the torn sky. Stars began appearing on the ends of the shadows like ripened fruits.

[That throne, it's been a while.]

Seven stars were now dangling on the ends of the branches. Constellations of the Big Dipper that aided me with destroying the [Absolute Throne] were there.

Countless Constellations began descending from the sky like shooting stars.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'King Heungmu', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'Heaven's Wind God', is incarnating into the ark!]

Only these stars were willing to become our allies in this ark.

A sword crashed down like lightning among the descending Constellations and the

[Absolute Throne] exploded into bits. The Constellation trampling on the false king above the wrecked throne looked at me and spoke.

[Good work, descendant.]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is incarnating into the ark!]

Fin.

[You have forcefully entered the 'Final Ark'!]

Jeong Hui-Won was greeted by the swarm of Constellations as soon as finding herself inside the ark.

[You have entered the 'Hot Naraka'!]

She couldn't make heads nor tails of what on earth was going on here.

“…Why did it have to be hell, of all places? Did I commit a lot of sin in my past life?"

There was no mistaking the fact that the enemies before her eyes were aiming for her life, though. Jeong Hui-Won discovered the pot-bellied but emaciated 'starving ghosts'

tripping over each other and rushing towards her like falling mountains, and urgently shouted out.

"Uriel!!"

There was no reply. But Uriel's blessing was still permeating within her. As white wings grew out from Jeong Hui-Won's back, crimson corona permeated within her entire frame.

['Hour of Judgement' is activating!]

The moment she swung her sword, the swarm of starving ghosts before were completely swept away.

[Evil-leaning Constellations have picked up your scent.]

Enemies rushed in without an end. The ones found in this 「Hot Naraka」 seemed to be parasitic creatures of other worldviews.

Fortunately, she wasn't alone in this place.

"Hui-Won-ssi!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong hurriedly ran up to her location from somewhere and stood back-to-back with her.

"I guess you've committed a lot of wrong yourself, Hyeon-Seong-ssi."

[Demon King, 'Ruler of Crimson Fog', is glaring at you!]

[Demon King, 'Monstrous Armed Duke', is revealing its animosity towards you!]

[Constellation, 'Hell's Parasite', is observing you!]

[Constellation, 'Flame of Muspelheim', is patiently waiting.]

Their magical energy would eventually run out trying to fend off all these starving ghosts. Not only that, hell's Constellations and Demon Kings were waiting for an opening to strike, as well.

"Behind you!"

Before they realised it, a swarm of starving ghosts sneaked closer from her rear and pounced with their large maws wide open. However, a cannon shell aiming at these creatures flew in from somewhere and blew them away.

"Hui-Won eonni!"

It was from Yi Ji-Hye's battleship. Jeong Hui-Won's complexion brightened as she shouted out.

"Are the kids with you?"

"I think they were dropped somewhere near Sang-Ah and Seol-Hwa eonni's vicinity!

As for Pil-Du ahjussi-!"

"We don't have the time to worry about him, too!"

Gyaaaaaaahk!

More and more of hell's denizens appeared. The demon counts they fought back in the

[Dark Castle], and duke-level demons they encountered back in the [Demon World]

also began making their appearances, as well.

Every one of them had become a part of this hell, to be used as subjects for the next scenario.

"An Archangel!!"

"Kill them, and we can also acquire the positions of Demon Kings!"

Yi Ji-Hye's bombardment towards them commenced. All the cannons in the [Turtle Dragon] spat out flames, causing the hell's terrain to transform and lava to spew out uncontrollably. Demons struck by the bits and lumps of lava all melted down, but their numbers didn't seem to decrease at all.

[Applicable worldview is a domain ruled by 'Evil'.]

Individuals thought to be dead were rising back up again a few minutes later. The spooked Yi Ji-Hye hurriedly shouted out.

"General-nim!! Where are you?! Why aren't any Constellations showing up here??"

Unfortunately, no Constellation replied to her calling. Not even Uriel, Maritime War God, nor the 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong…

They now had to rely only on their own strength to fight.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

It was then, sparks began dancing in the air.

[Ba-aaaht!]

A roundish portal opened up and Biyu popped out from there.

"Biyu!!"

She used to be no bigger than a soccer ball, but now she had grown so big that it was difficult to wrap one's arms around her.

「All Dokkaebis grow up by eating Fables.」

Biyu yelled out 'Baaaaht!' and curled up as powerful sparks exploded out from her figure. Those dancing sparks then tore open a wall of the cabin.

Dududududu!

Shells burst out of the automated turrets emerging from the torn-open wall.

"Are you alright!?"

Gong Pil-Du's 'moving castle' was there. His [Armed Fortress] now boasted a scale of a complete battle-ready castle after his Stigma had evolved once more. And on top of this fortress were Yu Sang-Ah, Yi Seol-Hwa, as well as the two kids.

"Eonni! Ahjussi! Come up this way!"

Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Hyeon-Seong grabbed Yi Seol-Hwa's offered hands and jumped up towards the top of the fortress.

Meanwhile, Yi Ji-Hye's longsword gleamed dangerously towards the starving ghosts madly chasing after them by climbing up on the fortress's walls.

「In a world where no light from the stars could illuminate them, the

members of

rescued their own by themselves.」

"Let's get started."

Through the authority of the [Lotus Pedestal], Yu Sang-Ah began restricting the enemies' movements; in the meantime, Yi Ji-Hye and Gong Pil-Du continued to fire away.

The [Chimera Dragon] sat on the far edge of the fortress and fired its Breath at the Constellations approaching from the air. As for the enemies that managed to break through this pandemonium and climb up successfully, they were greeted by Jeong Hui-Won's falling sword strikes.

Yi Hyeon-Seong's [Steel Transformation] protected the skins of his companions, while Yi Seol-Hwa treated him as he got injured instead of them.

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「This combination had been dreamed up by a certain person a long time ago.」

However, there was one boy who didn't appear in the original story.

"Aaaaaaah!"

['Wall that Divides Good and Evil' is exercising its authority!]

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit' is bringing its own subordinates!]

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

A pitch-black swarm of locusts rushed in and blanketed the skies of hell. These creatures latched onto the Incarnation Bodies of the demons reviving from their deaths and began tearing into them.

[Aaaaahk!!!]

Demons cried out in despair as they fell into the eternal cycle of their regenerating flesh painfully getting ripped apart and devoured repeatedly.

Jeong Hui-Won's eyes shone in the light of hope as she observed the strengths of the starving ghosts declining gradually. The one-sidedly disadvantageous battle situation was slowly but surely turning on its head. Although destroying this 'Hot Naraka' would still be asking for too much, at the least, buying enough time seemed quite possible.

The only problem right now had to do with the Constellations that hadn't joined the battle yet.

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

It was then, the stars filling up the skies of this hellish landscape suddenly began moving towards a certain direction. Constellations pounded on the interior wall of the

'Hot Naraka' and destroyed it before streaming outside through there.

Once the lights from the Constellations disappeared, the balance of the worldview also collapsed as well. The starving ghosts could no longer recover and sunk back inside the abyss of hell itself.

The companions finally got to take a breather and stared at each other.

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“…What just happened?"

Yi Seol-Hwa asked that question, but no one answered back.

One thing was for sure, though – an event humongous enough to make those stars lose interest in this place was happening somewhere right now.

Everyone's gaze was fixed on Gong Pil-Du next. He groaned loudly and began driving his [Armed Fortress].

"Fine, fine. I got it, so stop egging me on."

too followed after those stars and began moving. Constellations flooding out from all corners of the 'Final Ark' were flying towards a certain cabin as if they were being sucked in by a black hole.

「This was their first time seeing so many stars move like that.」

Even Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Hyeon-Seong, and Yu Sang-Ah, too… None could tear their eyes away from this overwhelming spectacle of every star in the sky raining down. It was at once beautiful, and rather chill-inducing, too.

「And also, sorrowful.」

By the time they abruptly woke up, they realised that all these stars were swirling around a single star in the centre. The sight of the room could be seen through the large crack in the wall.

The [Shindansu] had broken past the heavens. And with that tree as their centre, Kim Dok-Ja's stars were engaged in a bitter struggle.

[Stop them!! This is our Hwangsanbeol!!!!]

They were the Korean Peninsula's Constellations.

Kim Yu-Shin, having lost his arm, was shouting out, and Gyebaek was swinging his greatsword towards the Constellations.

The Bald General of Justice exterminated the enemies with his club, while Seo Ae One Stroke of Brush strengthened the allied Constellations' Statuses by writing in mid-air

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with his brush.

Joseon's number one sorcerer morphed into a gigantic tiger to fight against Mithra and its turtle, while the Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade summoned all of her Hwarangs to defend against the 's forces.

There was an unfamiliar Constellation among them, too – a star with its eyes closed in the centre of this tree. The [Shindansu]'s Fable was bubbling up with him as its core.

[Constellation, 'Virtuous Wanggeom', is gathering the Probability of the founding gods!]

It seemed that he was one of the Korean Peninsula's 'founding gods'.

His blessing enveloped Kim Dok-Ja and the Korean Peninsula's Constellations, and protected them.

“…General-nim…?"

They could also see Constellations atop the Turtle Ship, as well.

The sight of the rolling ocean, brought to reality through 「Stage Transformation」; that's where Yi Ji-Hye's Constellation sponsor was.

[Today reminds me of that day on Noryang. It's my honour to fight alongside you, Jun-Gyeong.]

[It is mine, as well.]

The blade of menacingly-growling Cheok Jun-Gyeong collided with Thor's hammer.

Unfortunately, the 's forces were simply too many for this small group to fight against.

[Constellation, 'Flame of Muspelheim', is summoning its greatsword!]

Eventually, even the Constellations coming from the same hell as Jeong Hui-Won began joining in, as well.

No matter how excellent both Cheok Jun-Gyeong and Yi Sun-Shin were as Constellations, it was still impossible for them to stop all of them.

But then, a light flashed from the [Shindansu], and some things began growing on the ends of its branches. The lights then descended like ripened fruits, containing people the companions were intimately familiar with.

"It's our great masters!"

Powerful auras of white lightning, as well as sword-light of Breaking the Sky, dyed the battlefield; then, Jang Ha-Yeong and the Transcenders from 「Murim」 began roaming the battleground as well.

They were followed by Japanese Youkai Constellations rushing in; 'Tengus' grasping feathered fans, and 'Kappas' rose up from beneath the water – even the subordinates of 'Yamata no Orochi' could be seen, as well.

[You bunch of weak Incarnations dare to…!]

Fruits endlessly fell from the [Shindansu].

Among the spreading white lightning dyeing the battlefield bright, the beings from the 6th scenario began appearing next.

"For Kim Dogeza!"

They were 'small people' from [Peaceland]. Those that fought together with them against the calamity were descending to this battlefield to help them out.

[Small Constellation from the small planet is pulling out its sure-kill weapon 'Dragon Needle'.]

Every time Constellations' swords moved, the small people died in their droves.

"Ah, ah… Ahhhh…!"

None of the companions could speak at the horrifying spectacle of the cabin. And at the centre of this battlefield, the brightest star on the middle of the mountain made out of dead stars also didn't speak a

word, either.

「Kim Dok-Ja on top of the destroyed 'Absolute Throne' maintained his silence.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok, Han Su-Yeong, and Anna Croft were all fighting there. They were giving

their all to fight against Constellations while vomiting out blood, scraping every Fable they could, and squeezing out every ounce of willpower they possessed.

「The sky was rapidly changing from the collision of worldviews.」

's Odin, 's Osiris, 's Shiva, 's Nuwa… Not just them, but Constellations from Nebulas with unfamiliar names all joined in, causing the sky to brighten up in the deluge of blinding light show.

「What blocked light wasn't darkness, but another light.」

The companions subjected to this chokingly bright world felt as if their very existences were being denied. The starlights from the Constellations were telling them this – that the history they had compiled so far was nothing.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

Jeong Hui-Won also knew. She knew that those beings couldn't be defeated even if all of her companions jumped in right now.

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

She needed an even stronger Fable, one that could strike down all those blinding stars.

The kind of power that could destroy all those constellations.

However, Jeong Hui-Won didn't possess such powers. Even with [God Slaying] or

[Hellfire], it was still impossible.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at her own Incarnation.]

Jeong Hui-Won looked up at the sky. Her sponsor that had been keeping silent until then was there. She really liked her sponsor. And because of that, there were certain things she felt scared of asking for the Archangel's help.

"Kim Dok-Ja…"

Even then, Jeong Hui-Won had to say it.

"…Please, rescue him, Uriel."

Right away, her sponsor replied back to her.

[Alright.]

Hotly-burning flames blanketed the surroundings. She sensed Uriel standing right behind her. Without a doubt, the Archangel must've been using her uniquely noble eyes to look at the same world Jeong Hui-Won was looking at.

Suddenly, Jeong Hui-Won was overcome with fear.

「What if Uriel dies in this place?」

Uriel was just a 'Fable-grade Constellation'; even if she was very powerful, she still couldn't fight and win against a Myth-grade Constellation. But then, a soft hand touched her shoulder.

[Don't worry, Hui-Won-ah. I'll make it happen, no matter what.]

The back of Uriel walking past was smaller than Jeong Hui-Won's. The latter just couldn't tear her eyes away from that small back.

['Most Ancient Good' has begun its storytelling!]

The white wings spread out from that small back and enveloped the whole world as Uriel's true voice resounded out.

[Oh, hear me, Eden.]

Jeong Hui-Won felt something shake noticeably inside her.

Something similar to a fragment was wriggling inside; it was a weighty fragment that began sleeping within her ever since the conclusion of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

['Wall that Divides Good and Evil' has regained its original power!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Right away, angels began appearing one by one. Lower- and mid-tier angels, their number swelling from ten, then to a hundred, then shooting past a thousand in an

instant.

Among them were familiar faces, such as Archangel Gabriel. Not only that, the spirits of the Archangels who died during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' could be seen among them, as well.

[Uriel.]

The 'Guardian of Youth and Travel', Raphael called out to her. The angel who always looked at the world with sleepy eyes was slowly kneeling down before her along with all the other Archangels.

[Will you be inheriting ?]

Uriel didn't reply, but looked back at her Incarnation, instead. A certain faint smile seeped into the noble expression of this Archangel. Jeong Hui-Won called out, but her voice couldn't reach its intended target.

The moment Uriel nodded her head, Raphael loudly proclaimed.

[Uriel, from henceforth you are our 'Great Good'.]

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

The vast corona completely enveloped Uriel's figure.

Then, the stunningly-brilliant platinum-hued armour settled on her. All of Uriel's Status was now manifesting itself, just like back on that day she reigned as the terror of all demons after cutting off countless demon kings' heads.

The strongest star in .

The moment the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' grasped her sword, every kneeling angel stood right back up.

[Oh, my fellow angels, let us commence with the final 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

Fin.

Odin from the east, Nuwa from the west, and Osiris from the south…

We were somehow maintaining a precarious balance within this cauldron of Great Fables ceaselessly pounding on us.

[Your Incarnation Body is breaking down!]

I forgot how many times I've heard that message by now. Yu Jung-Hyeok's body right next to me wasn't okay, either; he was left in tatters after taking on the combined attacks from both Odin and Nuwa meant for Han Su-Yeong and me.

Our gazes met for a moment there, but he scowled at me as if to ask, "What are you looking at?" before pulling something out from his inner pocket to swallow it.

[Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', is using 'Life and Death Pill'!]

In the end, he had consumed the very last Life and Death Pill Yi Seol-Hwa gave us. We didn't have any left now.

[Guwaaaaah! Endure!!]

The Korean Peninsula's Constellations roared out like untamed beasts and wielded their weapons.

Kim Yu-Shin did, so did Gyebaek, too. Gwanchang, as well. Constellations that crossed swords once upon a time were now turning over a new leaf together in a single Fable under the shade of the [Shindansu].

Cheok Jun-Gyeong could be seen standing at the forefront cutting enemies down.

「[This is why I can't abandon this land even though I curse it so much. Only a few dying will resolve the issue, yet everyone's jumping in to die together… 」

Even Pungbaek stayed by his side to raise winds and roared out like a lion. The one who was at odds with us back in the Great War of Saints and Demons, was now standing up for our sakes.

「[I can aid the descendants of . I don't need any compensation.」

Pungbaek's winds writhed violently, and the 's Constellations rode on that wind to rush forward. Yi Sun-Shin's [Ghost Fleet] kept firing their cannons, while Gyeonhwon's arrows pierced through the hearts of many stars.

However, the number of enemies didn't seem to be decreasing at all.

[Where is this Korean Peninsula even located in?]

[These measly Historical Figure-grade bastards dare to…! You insects! Sweep them all away!]

Even then, the Korean Peninsula's Constellations were enduring well.

[Great Fable, 'Shindansu', is raising the strengths of all Constellations from the Korean Peninsula!]

If the enemies had Odin and Osiris, then we too had a Myth-grade Constellation – the Myth-grade that could greatly enhance [Shindansu]'s power, Constellation 'Virtuous Wanggeom'.

[Constellation, 'Virtuous Wanggeom', says that this is all the aid he can provide.]

Unlike other Myth-grade Constellations, his sense of presence seemed quite faint. It was probably due to the effects of this world-line; didn't have a whole lot to do during this world-line, after all.

And it was quite likely that 's Constellations couldn't get out from the ark's cabin due to the pressure exerted by other Myth-grade Constellations.

[Do not show them your backs! We shall never retreat!]

[Fable, 'Burning the Boats', has begun its storytelling!]

Cheok Jun-Gyeong raised his sword, and Yi Sun-Shin continued to command the others.

These heroes from the mythical history who had never yielded to any myth, continued their battle against the actual gods from various myths.

Even though their flesh was torn apart and their entire bodies were wrecked, they never knelt down and continued to wield their blades.

「The Korean Peninsula's surface area was getting smaller and smaller.」

Jeon Woo-Chi who had morphed into a tiger to fight, finally collapsed. Seo Ae One Stroke of Brush's personal brush broke, and Yi Sun-Shin's Ghost Fleet sank one by one.

Even Cheok Jun-Gyeong's sword, capable of cutting down thousands of enemies, mountains and seas, was getting dull, as well.

I already expected this. I was supposed to harden my resolve several times over by now. The Fable to be written from now on would consist of texts stained by the blood of these stars.

['s final Great Fable is sprouting new buds!]

Right next second, Thor's hammer came flying in at Cheok Jun-Gyeong's neck. It was an attack that not even the Korean Peninsula's greatest warrior could dodge.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is unleashing all of her Status!]

And it was Uriel that blocked the incoming attack.

"Kim Dok-Ja! Archangels have arrived!"

Han Su-Yeong shouted out.

More Archangels descended on the battlefield, accompanied by blinding rays of light.

And in the centre of them was Uriel wielding the [Flames of Conflagration].

「[… It's like, me and Gabriel want to join 'Kim Dok-Ja Company' too, you see?]」

Uriel said that to us just before we left for the Final Scenario. She wanted to join our Nebula, and wanted to become our strength, she said.

「The Constellation who has changed the most from the 'original' Kim Dok-Ja knew.」

I never figured out why Uriel liked our story so much.

「"Do you really wish to go that far just to help us?"」

All I could do now was to cowardly take advantage of her goodwill.

[A new 'Great Good' has appeared in !]

Uriel's Status whipped about stylishly.

She was now no longer the 'Fable-grade Constellation' Uriel.

Ku-gugugugu!

[…A new 'Great Good'?]

Myth-grade Constellations looked at Uriel and began freaking out.

The new Great Good of , an existence meant to replace the Myth-grade Constellation, 'Metatron'. Uriel had become 's leader, and chose to help us.

[All seraphim, advance!]

Along with Raphael's signal, Archangels collided against the Fable-

grade Constellations from and .

['Most Ancient Good' is searching for its enemy!]

[Do you really think that the likes of a destroyed Nebula can overturn this battle's outcome?]

Odin remained unflustered even then, and raised his spear to point it at Uriel. And the god spear that reputedly no one could evade, [Gungnir], flew towards her.

[Get out my sight.]

The Statuses of [Flames of Conflagration] and [Gungnir] collided.

Odin's thunderclaps tearing through the heavens, and Uriel's conflagration that incinerated hell, clashed face to face.

Two Statuses fought intensely; in the battle between two Myth-grade Constellations where neither of them would normally back down, it was surprisingly Odin who withdrew first. His left arm summoning the spear back was trembling ever so slightly.

[How pathetic, Odin. Allow me to help.]

Myth-grade Constellations were far more sensitive towards danger than any other existences.

They were the oldest stars in this world that hated unexpected variables. And that was why they would never allow any sort of danger to blossom.

Myth-grade Constellations exchanged glances in less than a blink of an eye and commenced bombardment on Uriel simultaneously.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Even if she was now 's Great Good, she still wouldn't be able to defend against such an attack. However, she didn't back down. Even though feathers of her wings were ripped off, and crimson Fable splattered on her pale cheeks, her sword didn't weaken at all.

[None of you are my greatest enemy.]

Uriel who had always been watching our Fable from high up above in the sky – her eyes were now shifting in my direction.

[Nebula, , is readying its 'Great Fable'.]

"Dok-Ja-ssi!"

From afar, my companions including Jeong Hui-Won were rushing towards us. Maybe she already knew the truth. Knew what Uriel was planning to do here.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

alone couldn't fight against all of these Great Nebulas. The strengths of the Myth-grade Constellations permeating within this ark would even equal the whole of

itself. So, if one wanted to defeat them, one required a 'Great Fable' with truly incredible Probability.

[The 「Stage Transformation」 is activating!]

Simply put, a massive myth that could bring all the other myths to their doom was needed.

[I am the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

Uriel slowly blinked her eyes currently burning up like a real demon's.

[I wish for an 'Evil' that will validate my Modifier.]

As her words came to an end, flames erupting out from her [Flames of Conflagration]

burned through the stars in the heavens. Something began writhing from the other side of hell.

「The Most Ancient Good called out to its enemy.」

Right then, Yi Gil-Yeong's eyes suddenly became white.

「And the demon curled up in hell's deepest pit answered that call.」

Something resembling the pitch-black storm clouds rolled in from beyond the burning sky.

Something that was not , not , and also not , flooded in towards this side while emitting truly despicable and insidious aura.

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is opening the Pandæ monium!]

Demons began waking up from the skies of the burning hell.

['Most Ancient Evil' is searching for its enemy!]

['Wall that Divides the Good and Evil' is drawing out its theme!]

The master of Pandæ monium biding its time for an innumerable amount of time finally revealed its true strengths in place of the absent Demon Kings.

And so, the two representatives of Good and Evil began colliding with Myth-grade Constellations caught in the middle.

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「And there was an ancient being observing that great battle between Good and Evil.」

The [Chimera Dragon] flapping its wings in Shin Yu-Seung's side

suddenly began emitting light from deep within its body. It was a scene that happened in the original, too. Finally, her dragon was evolving into an 'Ancient Dragon'.

Soon, radiant golden lustre blinded everyone. The [Chimera Dragon], now enjoying the Status of a complete 'Ancient Dragon', roared out to the heavens above.

The 「Dragon Call」. The howling of a dragon that summoned its kin by sacrificing its own life.

Gu-aaaaaaaah!!

And from the other side of the darkened sky, howls of dragons could be heard. Traces of electricity and flames danced everywhere. All dragons living in this world heeded the [Chimera Dragon]'s call and were flying over here.

[The 「Stage Transformation」's degree of reproduction is rapidly rising up!]

Rather than tearing into the stars, the dragons started fighting tooth and nail against each other, instead. Even the [Gold Dragon's Heart] replacing my original heart was writhing powerfully as well.

It was a sight we all witnessed back in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

「A Dragon with seven heads and ten horns will awaken from the centre of the hottest hell.」

「He is the Dragon among all Dragons. The leader of Dragons born in the centre of chaos, the oldest hatred in this world.」

The 'Dragon's Festival', the riot of dragons taking place in the hottest place in hell, had commenced.

Myth-grade Constellations belatedly realised what was going on here and cried out in sheer astonishment.

[C-could these bastards be…?!]

[Make them stop!]

Everyone here knew very well what kind of calamity would crash the party if another

'Great War of Saints and Demons' took place here.

[You, you bastards dare!!]

The Great Dokkaebis, not many remaining now after Bihyung's sacrifice, revealed themselves inside the ark. The Great Dokkaebi 'Garang' with its horn now broken off, was yelling out loudly.

[Suppress that Great Fable's Probability!]

Great Dokkaebis activated their authorities, and the Myth-grade Constellations inside the ark used up their own Coin reserves, as well.

[Constellation, 'Master of December 25th', does not want 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

[Constellation, 'Great Mother God Who Created Man Out of Earth', does not want

'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Father', does not want 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Abydos', does not want 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

The Probability of the unfolding Stage Transformation was being suppressed as an incredible amount of Coins got injected simultaneously.

The 's Probability flowed towards the direction the majority wanted to see. And at this stage, there didn't seem to be anyone out there capable of going against the will of those possessing the most amount of Coins in this world.

「With an exception of one being.」

I heard the soft hum of an engine coming from behind, followed by the familiar scent of a cigar.

"You've come."

The 'Mass Production-type Maker' stood on my side and spoke up. [This is the type of Fable that I love the most.]

He also said something similar back then, when we first met during the 'Gourmet Association'.

He was the Constellation that loved all the Fables of this world.

He formed an unreadable expression while looking at the Fable of 'Great War of Saints and Demons' writhing violently before his eyes.

He was also a Constellation that spent his life mass-producing SSS-rank items.

[It has… taken a really long time.]

"My apologies."

[Honestly speaking, I felt puzzled when I first heard what my ■■ would be. I believed that no such ■■ would ever come knocking at my door.]

"And are your thoughts different now?"

The 'Mass Production-type Maker' wordlessly stubbed his cigar and killed it off. He then watched the Fable of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' with me. The history of all our battles was now being recreated in that place.

The 'Mass Production-type Maker' laughed out. [At the very least, I think I understand one thing – why my Fable coaxed me to amass such a large reserve of Coins until now.]

Coins began floating up from his fingertips. There were so many that I couldn't even dare to attempt at counting them.

[It seems that it was for the purpose of completing the 'One Single Stage'.]

Coins, along with his life itself, got sucked up into the sky. And his Coins collided with the will of the numerous Constellations. The Myth-grade Constellations roared out in anger, and the 'Mass Production-type Maker' calmly opened his mouth.

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The Constellation possessing this world's greatest authority replied to them.

[Oh, my dear Constellations. I apologise, but I simply must see this stage.]

And when all of his Coins were injected into the Probability in the air, its powerful storm began enveloping the entirety of the ark. Meanwhile, the Mass Production-type Maker's body suddenly aged at a visible rate.

[Constellation, 'Mass Production-type Maker's' ■■ is 'Depletion'.]

[The deficient Probability has been satisfied!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is being completely recreated on this stage!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

A horrifying howl exploded out from the sky. Along with that explosion, dragons fell towards the ground. I quickly pulled both Han Su-Yeong and Anna Croft closer, and along with Yu Jung-Hyeok, evacuated towards where our companions were.

Finally, the last verse of all the scenarios – the destruction of all

Constellations – was fast approaching us.

[Do not get sucked into this measly little 'Great War of Saints and Demons'! We've won against many so-called great apocalypses time and time again, and got this far!]

The 'Great Fables' of the Myth-grade Constellations began waking up all at the same time. Every Great Fable found in this world howled out, as if they were unwilling to be overwhelmed by the scale of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

However, it was too late now.

「This Dragon will look at the heaven once, and at earth once, and will strike with its tail. Stars will fall from that single tail-flick, and a direction of the world will disappear.」

A pair of eyes began gleaming from within the darkness.

Han Su-Yeong shuddered uncontrollably the moment she heard the violent howling of

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a dragon.

"Kim Dok-Ja!! Could this be…!"

"It is."

"You crazy?! If you wake that thing up again now-!!"

"We aren't planning to wake that guy up."

I looked at Yu Sang-Ah sitting in the lotus position in the corner while focusing all of her mind on something. Sweat drops trickled down her forehead.

['Wall that Decides Samsara' is maintaining the seal on the Apocalypse

Dragon.]

As long as the successor of Sakyamuni was alive, the sealed Apocalypse Dragon would never be summoned to this place.

The flustered Han Su-Yeong asked me again. "T-then, what…?"

"Don't you get it?"

She looked up at the dragons falling from the sky with a dazed expression.

The 'Dragon's Festival' was a ceremony to decide the strongest dragon. And the single dragon that managed to survive until the end would become the 'Final Dragon of Revelation'.

Since when did it start? Han Su-Yeong's left arm was trembling like crazy.

[The new 'Final Dragon of Revelation' has been selected!]

Ku-ooooooohhh!!!

Eventually, a massive dragon revealed itself through the destroyed ceiling of the ark.

It was so huge that it'd easily tear apart your regular giant star to shreds.

Bewitching black flames were dancing on the jet-black, slick exterior that had shed its last layer of skin.

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[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', has incarnated into the 'Final Ark'!]

"He's the Apocalypse Dragon now."

Fin.

The Final Dragon of Revelation.

The great calamity that decides the end of 'Great War of Saints and Demons' as well as the most horrifying apocalypse of itself.

[The 「Stage Transformation」's degree of reproduction has exceeded the percentage limit!]

The lightning bolts powerfully tearing through the storm clouds now took on a different hue than before. Both 's Odin and 's Osiris jaws dropped in sheer astonishment.

"Black Flame Dragon!!"

The Apocalypse Dragon's gaze lingered on Han Su-Yeong's face for the briefest moment in time.

「It's possible that Uriel isn't the only Constellation different from the original.」

Back in the original novel, this guy was the Constellation backer of the 'Demon of Delusions' Kim Nam-Woon. He was the leader of evil dragons that represented the

'Absolute Evil', not to mention the ruler of the Nebula .

He raised his head high up to the sky and cried out.

The entirety of shuddered from the screech that announced the arrival of this world's final pages.

「[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's' ■■ is 'Something that can't be found'.]」

I had read what his ■■ was from the original novel. His description showed up when he became Yu Jung-Hyeok's ally for a little while during the 1863rd turn.

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「The evil dragon suffering from the worst possible depression in this .」

The reason why the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' believed his age to be 15 was simply that he'd not be able to continue on if he didn't.

A life stretching for thousands, no, tens of thousands of years, made an originally solitary dragon into such a creature.

In order to stop itself from decaying, he chose not to age. He chose not to lose his curiosity of the world. He chose to torment Incarnations or play bizarre pranks. And for his final prank, he even chose to betray the 'Absolute Evil', too. He stood on Yu Jung-Hyeok's side and while mocking the , breathed his last.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', has reached his ■■!]

What about this world-line, though?

Did he finally manage to find his ■■ within this empty universe?

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's' ■■ is 'Pureness'!]

The 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' looked at me and smiled.

His child-like eyes were now dyeing the world in the night of apocalypse as if he was satisfied by the role he had found.

[Fully-satisfied Probability has recreated the 'Apocalypse Dragon' in the Final Scenario!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has achieved perfect unity with the scenario!]

The Myth-grade Constellations began roaring at the top of their lungs at the reproduction of Apocalypse Dragon.

[This is impossible…!!]

Every Constellation alive was well aware of the Fable of Apocalypse Dragon, the great calamity capable of destroying a section of with nothing but its 'First

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Tail-flick'.

[Stop him! Kill him before the tail-flick commences!!]

The clearly-freaking out Myth-grade Constellations ungainly lost their composure and issued their orders.

Han Su-Yeong, Yu Jung-Hyeok and I all looked up at that spectacle.

「None among these Myth-grade Constellations have experienced the 'Apocalypse Dragon' before. Because, their peers that did fight it had all perished back then.」

After all, these bastards had been hiding inside this 'ark', the safest place in the entire world, and watched the moment of the Apocalypse Dragon being unshackled as if it was a form of entertainment. In other words, they had absolutely no clue what this fear was like, the terror, and what it meant to risk their lives.

Yu Jung-Hyeok next to me asked a question. "You… You have been preparing for this moment all along, haven't you?"

I slowly nodded my head. "That's right."

From the moment the first scenario began, I had been calculating a certain something.

「Just how much Fable would I need to compile in order to massacre the Constellations in the Final Scenario?」

I couldn't get to an answer. A human's lifespan was short, but stars were eternal. Since our starting lines were different, the battle would never be fair, and most important of all, I wasn't a regressor like Yu Jung-Hyeok. I couldn't live a life of 1863 regression turns and fight them afterwards.

"It was wrong to even think about compiling Fables to fight them. Whether it's a legendary or mythical Fable, you can't suppress those beings in terms of pure Status no matter how many Fables you manage to amass."

"And so, this is what you came up with."

I nodded my head and stared at Kim Yu-Shin and Gyebaek fighting together with

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[Shindansu] behind them.

「Kim Dok-Ja found the answer to this battle within the 'Stage Transformation'.」

The 「Stage Transformation」; although it was imaginary, this power would grow closer to reality as Probability expanded.

I confirmed the potential of this power when defeating Surya back in the 'Demon King Selection' battles, and the first outlines of my plan

formed in my head when we defeated back in the 'Gigantomachia'.

And I grew even more confident after we experienced the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', then won the 'Journey to the West'.

「The more they succeeded in the impossible-odds scenarios, the greater the power of reproduction their 'Great Fable' possessed.」

The air they breathed, the emotions they felt on that day – the fear humans felt while facing the apocalypse, their eyes fixed to the outpouring of the stars.

「And now, it was the turn of the Constellations to feel the fear people felt on that day.」

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The Apocalypse Dragon's 'First Tail-flick' commenced.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwakwa!!

The Apocalypse Dragon's tail-flick was divided into three separate shockwaves. The first was 'electrical wave', the second was 'heat wave', while the true tail-flick and the third wave was the 'wave of Chaos'.

[Kuwaaaaah---! I shall block this!]

Thor, who had defended against the electrical wave with me back then, stepped forward. He must've felt confident this time too, since he had dealt with it in the past.

Unfortunately, that was a terrible misjudgement on his part.

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[Thor-!!]

Thor's scorched-black figure crash-landed from the air.

The reason why he could defend against the electrical wave back then was because Dionysus, me, and my master were there to aid him. However, no one was helping him out this time.

[Uwaaaaah-!!]

Just as the fear-stricken Constellations turned around to run, all the Myth-grade Constellations unleashed their Statuses. Along with the incredible storm of aftermaths, all the stars in the sky flickered unsteadily.

And then, the exploding electrical wave blanketed entire surroundings like fine fog particles.

Once the view cleared out, one could clearly see that the Apocalypse Dragon's electrical wave had been weakened by a great deal.

[…And it only amounted to this much?]

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

The one who defended against the electrical wave was the leader of , Odin.

His dignified beard, which was his pride and joy, was scorched black. His clothing had all melted down, too, leaving him buck-naked. He revealed his skin, horrifyingly deformed by that wave, and laughed out loudly.

[With such measly little…!]

Shu-sususususut…

Right in the next moment, 's Constellations manning his side began scattering away like dust. Their lives were exhausted completely while dealing with the Probability necessary to offset the shockwave.

Odin's eye grew large from shock. Grey-coloured powder spread about helplessly in the air. With that one attack alone, half of was wiped out.

Ku-ooooooh!!

It was a similar situation with and as well.

[…Nuwa!!]

Osiris belatedly understood the severity of this situation and looked behind while shouting that name out. That was where he discovered Nuwa leading the forces of

to withdraw from this cabin. She had recognised the unfavourable battle situation and prepared to retreat from very early on.

"Gong Pil-Du."

After I called out, Gong Pil-Du's castle moved. His [Armed Fortress] accurately blocked off the path leading to the Emperor's worldview, and its turrets began spitting out flames.

"You're going nowhere."

At same time, the Apocalypse Dragon's second shockwave exploded out.

The flames of the 'heat wave' boiling over from the deepest part in hell began melting down the Constellations in the air.

[Bureau!! How long are you going to sit back and watch?!]

Odin's scream prompted the Great Dokkaebi Garang to raise its hand while Fable endlessly gurgled out from its mouth.

[…Fine. If you wish to use the 'Stage Transformation', then…]

Suddenly, I felt this ominous foreboding.

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

The 「Stage Transformation」's authority was now in full display. A powerful deluge of sparks caused me to hurriedly look behind, only to discover blood trickling out from Yu Sang-Ah's lips.

"Sang-Ah-ssi!!"

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The lotus pedestal spinning next to her suddenly developed cracks.

She vomited out a chunk of blood and spoke in an ashamed voice. "I stopped one…

from coming out, but… a portion of the other has…”

There were two great beings sealed away in the 'Isle of Reincarnators' by Sakyamuni.

One of them was the Apocalypse Dragon, while the other was…

['Wall that decides Samsara' is violently writhing around!]

['Wall that decides Samsara' is unveiling its theme!]

[Existence from another world is breaking past the 'Wall's' seal and has been recreated in this world!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Black fog was distorting the heavens as it rushed in here.

Countless eyes could be seen beyond that dark fog. It was 's cleaner, the one that should've been imprisoned within the eternal darkness after Sakyamuni had sealed it away.

[■■■■■■■■! Oh, the 'Indescribable Distance'!]

I realised what the Dokkaebis were trying to do. They were trying to use the same method I used back in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' to stop the Apocalypse Dragon.

「And so, the two calamities representing the absolute worst-case scenario of collided.」

[Haha, hahaha! You shall never reach the final verse! You shall never-!]

With those final parting words, the heads of all the Great Dokkaebis exploded.

The 'Indescribable Distance' sucked in their Fables and violently writhed. And then, this Outer God that had earned the Great Dokkaebis' Fables, and the Black Flame Dragon that earned the power of apocalypse, glared at each other.

[Third shockwave is now commencing!]

The Apocalypse Dragon's tail moved. The calamity moved very slowly, its speed very measured but assured.

Nuwa grew impatient and yelled out loudly in the air.

[Just what are you all doing?! Fu Xi! Shennong! All of you damnable Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, just for how long are you planning to enjoy the slumber of abyss?!]

Ku-gugugugu!!

Nuwa's true voice managed to wake up the 's ancient Constellations. The blessings from the 'Myth-grade' Constellations that hadn't shown themselves until now completely enveloped Nuwa's Incarnation Body.

The truly explosive rise in her Status forced Going Pil-Du's [Armed Fortress] back.

We needed to stop her.

We couldn't afford to let them escape back to their own worldview.

[Great Fable, 'Journey to the West', has begun its storytelling!]

The Nebula 's Great Fable began its story; Nuwa transformed into a gigantic Imoogi and her flames began amassing within her maw.

Just before the 's Constellations gathered their fighting spirit and rushed towards us…

Kurururung! Rumble!

Lightning bolts struck down from the sky and Nuwa screamed loudly.

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

The sight of Tongtian spread out in an instant, and an existence draped in the golden tiger hide defended me.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa…

He was the sole existence capable of standing up against the 's vast Myth-grade Constellations.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', has incarnated into the 'Final Ark'!]

He was also a star that became my brother.

['Meihouwang' is looking at you.]

['Bimawen' is looking at you.]

['Douzhanshengfo' is looking at you.]

All of the Sun Wukongs addressed me.

['Great Sage, Heaven's Equal' is turning his back to you.]

[Go now, maknae-ya.]

We could see the Apocalypse Dragon's tail colliding against the

Indescribable Distance in the distant sky. We all knew very well the likely outcome of that collision.

「He dreamed of every star's destruction. But, did he really wish for such a result?」

I had never forgotten the final moment of the 1863rd regression turn.

The Great Sage turned around and rushed towards the 's Constellations.

Even before I could reach out, Yu Jung-Hyeok and Han Su-Yeong grabbed me and ran away.

Gong Pil-Du continued to shout something or rather, while Yi Seol-Hwa was pulling out all the recovery medicines in her possession. I couldn't tell whether Yi Hyeon-Seong's forged steel covered us first, or the pure-white flash of light managed to blanket the world before that. It felt like my whole body was melting down from the incredible heat, only to become deathly cold as if I was exposed to a cold snap.

When I came to, we were already cast outside the cabin.

Fables leaked out indiscriminately from the gaps of the crumbling walls, painfully

singing the end of the stars.

The prop storage's door hadn't been closed yet. Ash drifted out through the half-open doorway.

['The 4th Wall' is violently trembling.]

Maybe, somehow, everyone inside that cabin was…

Shu-sut…

There was a faint presence of someone beyond it, and Han Su-Yeong's voice entered my ears almost at the same time.

“…Kim Dok-Ja?"

I crawled towards the door. My heart didn't want to stop pounding away. I barely managed to reach the rim of the doorway, and saw someone standing there.

「Torn white feathers were cascading downwards one by one.」

My lips bobbed up and down. I wanted to say something.

But in place of my mouth wanting to open, Uriel slowly bent down first.

[…Dok-Ja…]

I couldn't hear her true voice properly. I tried so hard to get back up as Uriel reached out to me. And her white hand brushed past my face as if she was stroking my cheek and brows.

I saw the enemy Constellations standing back up from beyond Uriel's broken wings.

Some stars somehow managed to survive even from this utterly horrifying calamity.

[The 'Stage Transformation' has concluded.]

I could no longer sense the Status of the 'Indescribable Distance'. I then saw the huge body of the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' now lying unmoving on the floor – and the Constellations from the Great Nebulas pouncing on top of him, as well as demons tearing into the wings of Archangels.

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Countless enemies were approaching Uriel.

"Urie…!"

I was about to open the door, grab my sword, and cut them down for Uriel.

「However, the door didn't open.」

Uriel held fast the doorknob from the other side and didn't let go.

Jeong Hui-Won's cry, as desperate as a real scream, resounded out. "Uriel!! Hurry!!

Hurry and get out of there-!!"

[It's okay.]

I didn't want to hear what she was about to say next. Uriel smiled at me.

[You guys, you've only seen up to this far in the story, that's all.]

The cabin's door was closed shut.

[You have accomplished a feat that no star in has ever managed to accomplish!]

The story beyond the door could no longer be heard. Some of us screamed out, while some despaired. The ark seemed to tilt out of balance, before it crashed against something along with a loud boom. I rolled around on the floor ungainly. The vibration of the ark had already come to a stop by the time I lifted myself up, the wave of vicious dizziness washing over me nonstop.

I didn't have any energy left to even stand. I could only manage to raise my head and look ahead. My eyes followed after the broken partitioning walls to discover a new location.

That unknown something colliding with the ark had become connected to the vessel's interior.

[All the stars in will never forget you.]

None of those stars were looking at us now. But, there was one existence remaining

still looking at us.

['King of Stories' is waiting for you.]

A yellowish mineral-like object rolled down the slope of the destroyed ark. I recognised what that was. That 'gemstone' was what we had been searching for inside this ark all along, after all.

However, neither me nor my companions had any energy left to focus on that gemstone.

"…”

I left the ark and slowly scanned our surroundings.

We were greeted by a wall so vast that its ends couldn't be seen. Fables leaking out from the ark was permeating into that wall.

「And so, Kim Dok-Ja has finally arrived at his destination.」

That wall was now talking to me.

「The end of all these stories. The 'Final Wall' was right before their eyes.」

Fin.

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The smartphone inside my coat vibrated and emitted 'Woong, woong' noise.

「This whole story began the moment he read that novel.」

Texts rose above the phone. The expansive wall before me seemed uncannily similar to the screen of this device.

From Yu Jung-Hyeok's 3rd regression turn all the way to the 1863's – the wall that, most likely, had recorded all the stories that I knew of.

「Kim Dok-Ja used to think about a certain thing back when he was working for the QA team: 'What if I'm the only one who knows about this bug?'」

"You……”

I turned around and found Han Su-Yeong there. She seemed to have something to say, but was unable to find the right words. The bandages imbued with the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's grace wrapped around her left hand were slowly scattering away.

I took a close look at each of my companions. Jeong Hui-Won was on her knees, her visibly-shaking hands pressed to the ground, while Yi Hyeon-Seong was carrying the unconscious Yi Gil-Yeong. Yi Seol-Hwa and Gong Pil-Du were supporting each other while exiting from the ark.

And in the distance, I spotted Jang Ha-Yeong who had narrowly escaped from the cabin along with our masters.

“……Ahjussi."

Shin Yu-Seung was looking at her hands. Rather than calling out to me, though, her voice was much closer to a murmur directed at herself. A lone piece of scale from the

'Chimera Dragon' rested in her palm.

Yu Sang-Ah approached her and placed a hand on the girl's shoulder. As her hand felt the soft, trembling sob, Yu Sang-Ah wordlessly shifted her gaze over to the exit we all escaped from.

「The stars they used to know had grown dark.」

My vision shook from the dizziness. I couldn't sense the gazes of the stars. Was it because every single one of them was extinguished?

But, that couldn't be. No, this was simply because all the Great Dokkaebis had disappeared, that's all. Every channel operated by the Bureau had received massive impact and that caused system errors. Had to be.

「He wouldn't be able to go on if he didn't believe in that.」

I staggered but still managed to find my balance. The last person I spotted was Yu Jung-Hyeok. His Dark Heavenly Demon Sword was currently stabbing through the corpses of Great Dokkaebies. Fables from dead Constellations dripped steadily from the edge of his blade.

He was staring at me with his usual expressionless face of his.

「Is this the conclusion you desired?」

['The 4th Wall' is violently shaking!]

['The 4th Wall' is activating even more strongly!]

My mouth opened slowly, only to be shut again.

[Completion of the Final Scenario is imminent.]

The ark's core I had been searching for all this time rolled around on the ground. It was a piece of mineral emitting a brilliant yellowish

hue, The powers of countless

'Great Fables' drifting around in this world-line were condensed to create this hardened essence.

The [ark's core].

It was the source of energy for the great Fable weapon, 'Final Ark'. Destroying it would

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bring an end to this 99th scenario and conclude our battle.

[The completion of 's final Fable is around the corner!]

Tsu-chuchu……!

Suddenly, my steps came to a stop. Vines sprouted out from the ground and wrapped around my ankles. 'Zarathustras' appeared from seemingly out of nowhere and used restriction skills on me.

Selena Kim was avoiding my gaze as if she was apologetic about this. Soon afterwards, I could hear the prophet's voice.

"Thanks to you, our workload has been greatly lightened, Demon King of Salvation."

Anna Croft, already holding the ark's core, was looking in this direction.

「Humanity's hero that dreams of a different conclusion to Kim Dok-Ja.」

"You shouldn't be too surprised about this. I shall be taking this core with me."

I had already heard about the world she dreamed of.

The 'Perfect Night'. She dreamed of complete freedom from the gazes

of all Constellations, and that dream entailed migrating safely to a different world-line along with every Incarnation from this world.

However…

"The ark is already destroyed."

"It can be rebuilt."

Anna Croft looked back at the wrecked ark. It was broken beyond salvage, unable to be re-used ever again.

However, she didn't lose hope.

"One of the human Incarnations is proficient with crafting Fable weapons. Aileen under your care is another person capable of doing that, as well. Now that there aren't

any Myth-grade Constellations to hinder us, we……"

"Give me that core."

"……I see. There is still a 'Myth-grade Constellation' remaining, isn't there?"

Her eyes glowed in red.

The [Eye of Great Demon]; her power to read this world's past and future began tying me down. She had completely awakened the power of that eye, and currently, she enjoyed Status rivalling a decent Fable-grade Constellation.

「The opponent of all the stars.」

This was the same as the original, too. Anna Croft hated all the Constellations in this world. And that was why she swore to use the power of stars to destroy the stars themselves. In order to complete

her night, she'd not spare me, either.

「If this story was really the same as the original, that is.」

The tip of her blade pointing at me seemed to be hesitant over something.

“……It's not too late, Kim Dok-Ja."

The event that had never happened before in the original.

I sensed Yu Jung-Hyeok, standing not too far while holding the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]'s grip, being faintly surprised. Anna Croft lightly sucked in her breath and began telling her story.

"I… do not know the conclusion you dream of. My [Precognition] can't read that far ahead, you see. However, I can make an educated guess. The fact that my

[Precognition] can't see your conclusion means that it's related to that [Final Wall].

However, please consider this carefully, Kim Dok-Ja. Consider whether that is the best course of action for us all, for the rest of humanity or not."

This would be her first time speaking so many words at once.

I silently listened to her.

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"Isn't this enough already? You have experienced enough tragedies by now. You've lost so much, and your most precious things have been ridiculed upon. Even then, are you still curious about this world's 'One Single Fable'? Just for something like that, are you going to forsake the survival of the human race?"

Every word she spoke contained desperation. Words that emphasized

her justice, while resenting mine.

And soon, that had become a Fable, too. A blindingly bright Fable wrapped around

'Anna Croft' and the Zarathustras. Although not as clear or flashy as a Constellation's, it nevertheless was indomitable and beautiful. Every facet of the Fable they had compiled together contained their unyielding belief.

The emotion that countless stars had forgotten about a long time ago. She got this far because she hadn't forgotten her pledge.

"Kim Dok-Ja. Please give up on your ■■."

"……"

"I ask of you. Please, let us head to my 'perfect night' together."

Those words caused the eyes of several Zarathustras to grow wider. That was understandable, however. The offer she made just now was basically the same as going against her own beliefs.

What Anna Croft said was tantamount to asking me to become the lone star that would shine in the night of the brand new world.

Although I was thankful for the offer…

[I'm a Constellation.]

…I could never accept it.

Tsu-chuchuchu……

I lightly aroused my Status and the vines restricting me all fell away. And as if to mock her goodwill, all of my Fables began telling their stories.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

The horn of the Demon King grew up on my head, and…

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is howling out!]

The [Unbreakable Faith] that slew gods viciously cried out, and…

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is looking at the world of humans.]

Wings I received by betraying the Archangel spread out next. Then…

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is mocking .]

The ominous and evil aura of Chaos enveloped my entire body.

Anna Croft's eyes were trembling uncontrollably. They shifted around urgently as if to find any remaining trace of humanity from my appearance.

However, there was this thing that we both knew. How could you call an existence a regular human when you had to search so hard to find his humanity?

“……In the end, you're the same, is that it? Demon King of Salvation."

Deep anguish was thickly pervading her murmurs. Rather than a calm revelation of the truth, her voice contained her determination over a certain something, instead.

"I shall kill you right here."

Stupendous Status began flooding out from Anna Croft's figure. I already knew that she had been conserving her strength while getting this far.

"Even if you're a 'Myth-grade Constellation', you can't stop me with your current physical condition. Besides, your companions don't seem to be in their right frame of minds, so I……”

Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Yi Gil-Yeong, and even Shin Yu-Seung, too. They still hadn't recovered themselves yet, it seemed. Even Han Su-Yeong was wordlessly staring at me. Her eyes, the ones that always trusted in me, were shaking for the first time ever.

Perhaps it was inevitable. They had witnessed their sponsors getting slaughtered right before their own eyes, after all.

"Let's end it here."

A dozen or so Zarathustras all dashed towards Yu Jung-Hyeok in an instant. And right next second, Anna Croft approached me like a streak of light, her dagger stabbing towards my neck.

I calmly watched the tip of that blade, before opening my mouth.

[Enough with your pranks, Loki.]

Along with those words, Anna Croft's movement froze up.

I lightly raised my finger and brushed her dagger aside.

Looking clearly astonished, she muttered out in sheer confusion next.

"W-what is the meaning of……??"

[Constellation that likes changing gender is cackling away.]

"Loki, you! This is not what you promi…!"

A massive amount of Status bore down on Anna Croft and the Zarathustras. The so-called Constellation that liked changing gender, the final star of , 'Loki' was now standing there.

Not one among the Zarathustras could resist his power. Because it was precisely him who freed them from the 's control.

"But, I'm doing this for humani……!"

Those were Anna Croft's last words before she passed out. The core fell out from her hand and rolled on the ground towards my feet. I bent down and picked it up.

[It's really been entertaining, Demon King of Salvation.]

I straightened my back to discover a man standing before me – a man with green hair

and a mischievous smile.

[Constellation, 'One Who Changes His Existence', is looking at you.]

The One Who Changes His Existence. One of the highest-ranked Constellations in

, Loki.

Also, a Constellation who helped us many times during our journey up to this point, someone with an agenda that we couldn't figure out before.

He had safely escaped from the Apocalypse Dragon's calamity and chased after us.

"Thanks for your help."

[The conclusion to this world is literally right before us, so I can't afford to let that go to waste because of a measly little human… Besides all that. There isn't anyone left for you to frighten here, so why don't you undo that scary appearance of yours?]

I dismissed my horn and the wings, then spoke up.

"Why don't you reveal your true self as well?"

[What do you mean?]

"I thought we both tacitly agreed to drop the pretence?"

My words caused Yu Jung-Hyeok observing the situation to address me.

- Kim Dok-Ja.

- Your suspicions are correct.

I glared at Loki.

The Constellation, 'One Who Changes His Existence'. If my thoughts were correct, then this guy was no 'Constellation'.

[Constellation, 'One Who Changes His Existence', is revealing his true identity!]

[Cons■tellation, ■ his ■ ??iden■ty??'……]

Blinding light blanketed Loki, then his silhouette began changing next. His height shrunk down a little, and creases on his face rapidly increased in number. And eventually, two large growths ballooned out with his cheeks as the middle.

「The existence capable of exploiting the 's bug at will. The irreconcilable enemy of every Dokkaebi in the world, and the founder of the 'Seekers of Apocalypse'.

」

I had encountered this being once before.

Back in the Journey to the West's Tongtian river, he opposed the Great Dokkabies trying to obstruct me in my stead.

His lips distorted slightly to form an insidious grin.

[That's right. You people aren't the only ones dreaming of 's end.]

"……The Wenny King."

Having discovered the creature's true identity, Yu Jung-Hyeok unhesitantly unsheathed the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

[Why don't you put that thing away. I have no thoughts of fighting

you.] The Wenny King playfully waved his hands about and continued on. [What I wish to see is only one thing. The unknown 'something' found beyond this Final Wall that you've been searching for. That's all. And also……]

Go-oooooh!

[I don't think now isn't the time for you folks to worry about me.]

The moment I looked back, someone angrily grabbed hold of my collars. Yi Ji-Hye's face was pressing right up to mine. Fables of rage and resentment leaking out from her entire Incarnation Body was pounding down hard on my body.

"……Ahjussi. What the hell is this? Ng? Was this a part of your plan, too?"

The spirit of the ocean that used to permeate her could no longer be felt. That gentle scent of saltiness wafting in when I first met her back in the subway could no longer be picked up.

"Kim Dok-Ja!"

Yi Ji-Hye was crying as she shook me around. No one tried to stop her. Not Yu Sang-Ah, not Jeong Hui-Won, not even Shin Yu-Seung. Everyone's head was lowered, their eyes fixed to the ground.

「And Kim Dok-Ja understood their feelings.」

All of their resentment was my burden to carry.

「However, there was someone who didn't think that way.」

"Yi Ji-Hye."

「It was Han Su-Yeong.」

"Let me go!"

Yi Ji-Hye's reaction to Han Su-Yeong's hand grabbing her shoulder was vicious, to say the least. However, the latter didn't let go. Her dogged hand swept back Yi Ji-Hye's bangs, wiped the thick teardrops away, then she continued with what she wanted to say.

"The Black Flame Dragon, Uriel, the Maritime War God, they are not dead yet."

"How, how do you know that??"

"I can sense them. It's really faint, but I can definitely feel they are still alive. Also……"

Her voice sounded cold yet caring, to the point and didn't waver once. Only Han Su-Yeong could have spoken in such a voice.

"Wipe your tears away and take a good look. Look at the state of the bastard you're choking right now."

The stupefied-looking Yi Ji-Hye had dropped her head, only to raise it back up again.

And for a very long time, she hesitated and stared at me. I didn't try to avoid that gaze.

"But, why…?" Yi Ji-Hye's voice was trembling. "Why are you crying too, ahjussi…?"

Her hands grabbing hold of my collars let go. Han Su-Yeong quickly seized that opening to dig in and punched me in the face.

"Get your shit together, you idiot! Now, give us a proper explanation! You probably didn't come here without a concrete plan, right?"

If one were to flip her words around, then she was threatening to

really kill me if I caused such an event without thinking too much about it.

She continued with her questioning. "There is a way to save our Sponsors, right?

Right……??"

「There was no such method.」

Lights from many, many Constellations were turned off in the 's pitch-black night sky. However, you'd still be able to spot a few that flickered away when taking a closer look. They were stars with lights faintly discernible only after staring at them for a very long time.

「Kim Dok-Ja hated the Constellations. He had never forgotten that emotion, not even for a second.」

"……Right. I……"

「However, this world's scenario managed to change such a Kim Dok-Ja.」

I looked at the [Final Wall]. The wall where all the 'Fables' were recorded on.

The wall that existed solely to record the 'One Single Fable' that all the Dokkaebis longed for.

"But, it might be too late now."

All this tragedy existed to be recorded on that wall.

No, hang on. Maybe it was the opposite.

All these events happened because 'it was already recorded on that wall'.

"However, it's also possible."

Changing what happened already was impossible. It should not be possible to revive those whose souls had been extinguished, and get rid of the pain as if nothing happened.

Indeed, it shouldn't be possible at all to save a world-line that had been destroyed already.

Because, the damn Probability of this world wouldn't permit that. Because, such a story would be the same as the 'squared circle' Han Su-Yeong mentioned earlier.

「However, what if such a thing was possible…?」

「What if a 'wall' that could bring the 'squared circle' to reality existed in this world?」

I squeezed the core gripped in my hand tightly.

[Main Scenario #99 – 'Enemy of the Story' has been cleared!]

[Calculation for the completion reward has begun.]

[Currently, no Great Dokkaebis exist to take the role of calculating the reward.]

[Reward calculation is being delayed.]

…

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[You have earned the qualification to meet the 'King of Stories'.]

The blinding wall opened its jaw for us.

Fin.

[wishes to name your last Fable.]

[You are now given the choices of Final Fable.]

[Nebula 's epic has become the final candidate for the 'One Single Fable'!]

[Stars that will be born in will extol your Fable!]

While reading the messages popping up one after the other, we took stock of our current situation. Although they all still looked shellshocked, we simply couldn't afford to stop here. Gong Pil-Du suddenly raised his voice.

“……Will the main scenario end with this?"

Unlike how it usually was, no new scenario was issued even though a main scenario had come to an end. What entered our ears instead was a system message.

['s main scenario system has entered the closing sequence.]

It was a message none of us had ever heard before.

Curtains were finally closing on the vast world of scenarios. We all formed blank expressions, not knowing what to say.

"If this thing ends…… what will happen to the world?"

Gong Pil-Du stared at the Wall with a hollow expression. Countless texts blooming on the Wall must've sensed his gaze, because they repeatedly scattered only to reform again. Some among those texts were even related to Gong Pil-Du himself.

「The man who lost his family at the start of the scenario.」

He seemed to be deeply fatigued, somehow. I could've been mistaken, but I thought there was something welling up in his eyes, too. I hesitated for a bit, before addressing him.

"There is one more being remaining, the one that controls all the scenarios."

"That bastard…… has to be killed off, too?"

"If you're too exhausted, it's fine to remain here."

"After coming all this way?" Pure rage bubbled up on Gong Pil-Du's face. "I can never forgive that bastard. It won't nearly be enough for me to rip him apart into little pieces."

It felt as if I was the one being attacked the moment I peered into his eyes. At the same time, I thought I saw the Fables of regular people who died during the scenarios reflected behind his back.

「And all those Fables seemed to blame Kim Dok-Ja.」

"That bastard took away my family and my lands. I, I must definitely…!!"

Gong Pil-Du spoke up to there, and keeled over as bloody foams bubbled out of his mouth. Yi Seol-Hwa quickly supported him and felt his pulse.

"……The damage to his Incarnation Body is extensive."

During the battle inside the cabin, Gong Pil-Du protected the companions along with Yi Hyeon-Seong. His proud [Armed Fortress] was seriously damaged. The Status of his sponsor, the Defence Master, could barely be felt, too. It was quite likely that this was as far as he could go.

"I'll take him with us. He also has the right to witness the end, after all."

"Please take care of him."

Yi Seol-Hwa activated her unique skill [Stretcher], and placed Gong Pil-Du on the bed made out of magic net.

In the meantime, both Yi Ji-Hye and Jeong Hui-Won regained their energy and stood

up from their spots.

"Let's go, Dok-Ja-ssi. Whatever happens, we should still try to see the end, at least."

I was ashamed by the fact that Jeong Hui-Won had to say those words. Because she must've been the one to resent me the most among our group.

She lightly tapped me on the shoulder.

"Don't think about anything unnecessary. My sponsor told you, right? We only got to see that far in that story."

"……"

"Meaning, no one knows what will happen next."

Her voice contained an icy determination. Yi Hyeon-Seong put Yi Gil-Yeong on his back and nodded his head after hearing her.

"Hui-Won-ssi is correct."

It was the same story for both Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Ji-Hye.

「Even though so many things happened, the companions still believed in Kim DokJa.」

Could my companions see that sentence?

Was it okay for someone like me to read that sentence?

Tsu-chuchuchu……!

[Will you enter the interior of the 'Final Wall'?]

A new message floated up soon afterwards.

The Probability's sparks whipped about madly above the Wall. With those sparks as the centre, the Wall seemed to retract; letters above the white surface rescinded and a small entrance we could go through was generated.

Han Su-Yeong asked in a suspicious voice.

"……Do you have a plan for what's beyond here?"

Greyish fog filled up the inside of the entrance. It was a veil of fog I was familiar with

– from the sentence that I had memorised after reading them over and over again.

「Finally, Yu Jung-Hyeok who lost everything was looking beyond the fog.」

This passageway was the very same one that the 1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok had passed by.

"……You said that what happens next isn't even mentioned in the 'Ways of Survival'."

I nodded my head.

The only remaining thing was to enter. Although, my last concern was…

“……Please go ahead. 'Zarathustras' can't go any further. We've been informed that we don't have the qualifications to enter."

Unlike Anna Croft, her subordinates 'Zarathustras' didn't possess all that many Fables connected to . They looked at me with sorrowful eyes for a little while, then silently moved out of the way and created a path.

[Incarnation, 'Selena Kim' has accepted her ■■.]

[Incarnation Selena Kim's ■■ is 'Unreachable Dream'.]

- Please, take care of Anna.

Selena Kim's voice was transmitted through voice projection. I slowly but deeply nodded my head and turned around to leave.

Footsteps belonging to my companions could be heard coming from behind me. My companions had become one constellation; my companions, who didn't emit light in the same direction as everyone else.

"Let's get going."

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「Even then, everyone here all wished to confirm the conclusion.」

It was right then, a shadow suddenly appeared drifting around in the fog before us.

Anna Croft's blonde hair spread in the air. However, the one controlling her body wasn't her.

Yu Jung-Hyeok focused on the Wenny King's movements while tightly grasping the hilt of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword].

"Are you thinking of trusting the Wenny King?"

He hadn't lowered his wariness since a while ago, and continued to emit intense bloodlust towards the Wenny King at every opportunity he could find.

I also didn't like the Wennys. They tried to kidnap Biyu, and even tried to pull a fast one on me back in the Demon World, too.

"I don't trust him. We're just entering a temporary alliance, that's all. We made a deal in the past, you see."

"A deal?"

I didn't offer up a detailed explanation. Because the one who could do it for me made his appearance, that's why.

[Looks like you don't trust me at all, regressor.]

Seeing the Wenny King speak through Anna Croft's mouth, I couldn't help but think that this had to be the worst combination imaginable. To think that two individuals Yu Jung-Hyeok hated had been combined into one…

Yu Jung-Hyeok wordlessly sent his magical energy to the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. He was getting ready to strike down at the slightest hint of provocation.

[I heard the story from other Wennys. It seems that you've cut off the lumps of my children.]

"And do you wish for yours to be cut off, too?"

The Wenny King cackled as if he was deeply amused.

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"What's so funny?"

[I truly enjoy your unnecessary aloofness. You were the same back in the Demon World and in Murim. I had been spending a really long,

boring time there, but things became rather entertaining all thanks to you.]

"One more word, and I shall cut off your lumps."

"Oiii, Yu Jung-Hyeok."

Yu Jung-Hyeok seemed to be more fired up than usual, so I quickly stopped him. Nothing good would come about by getting into a scuffle with the Wennys here.

Why did it happen, though? His unfocused aura was different from his usual self.

Maybe his thoughts had gotten complicated now that the end was upon us.

The Wenny King alternated his gaze between Yu Jung-Hyeok and me before opening his mouth.

[I see that you two are good friends.]

Even as the scary glare in Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes was rekindled, the Wenny King carried on.

[I too had someone like that once upon a time. He used to love the stories a lot, just like the 'Demon King of Salvation' over here.]

"I don't want to hear about your sob story."

[We carried out the scenarios together. We overcame many close shaves and fought against the absolute beings that ridiculed us. We compiled Fables to create more Fables, and after compiling Great Fables, we even created an epic yarn, too. And with that epic, we eventually reached the 'Final Wall'.]

…The 'Wenny King' had reached this 'Final Wall' before?

This information never appeared in the 'Ways of Survival'.

[You probably never heard about it. That story doesn't even remain as a Fable anymore. Maybe someone like the 'Apocalypse Dragon', who had gone insane from the

repeated history, might be able to barely recall it.]

“……There was even back in your day?"

[Back then, it was called a slightly different name. The name was given only after we saw the end of this world.]

Here was a being that saw the 'end of the world' before us.

What was the ■■ for them back then? And just what happened back then that caused this creature to become the 'Wenny King' and drift around the scenarios?

[And that bastard is now called the 'King of the Stories'.]

The sound of something collapsing heavily could be heard from beyond the fog.

[That's why I'm looking forward to your last verses. I'm genuinely curious. Curious, on who'd end up as the final winner of this scenario……]

Tsu-chuchuchu……

The fog before us began rumbling loudly.

[Looks like it's time to go meet my old friend.]

Along with those words, all traces of the Wenny King vanished. However, his message continued to be heard.

[It'll be wise for you to start moving soon. Before you all get devoured, that is.]

…Devoured??

"Ahjussi!!"

Yi Ji-Hye following us from behind suddenly cried out and disappeared through the floor. And then, hands-like things suddenly emerged from the floor and nearby walls to grab and yank at our arms

and legs.

"Ji-Hye-ya!!"

[Character 'Yi Ji-Hye', has become a part of the great story.]

Jeong Hui-Won reached out towards Yi Ji-Hye being sucked into the floor. However, it was too late. Even Jeong Hui-Won herself was being sucked in now.

Walls transformed into bottomless quicksand and swallowed her up.

[Character 'Jeong Hui-Won', has become a part of the great story.]

"Hui-Won-ssi!"

I watched Yi Hyeon-Seong dash towards Jeong Hui-Won, but that only made me lose my bearing.

Did something like this happen back in the 'Ways of Survival'? Just what the hell……?!

「Yu Jung-Hyeok was the only person crossing this passage back in the 'Ways of Survival'.」

I had overlooked that simple fact. Not even once did Yu Jung-Hyeok try to cross this passage with these many people before.

"Everyone, gather around me!"

Unfortunately, it was too late by then. Yi Hyeon-Seong, Yi Seol-Hwa, Gong Pil-Du, and even Yu Sang-Ah and the kids, were all snatched up by the hands of the walls and got absorbed.

[Character, 'Shin Yu-Seung', has become a part of the great story.]

[Character, 'Yu Sang-Ah', has become a part of the great story.]

My heart was racing nonstop. The word 'Character' especially got on my nerves amidst all those messages.

"Han Su-Yeong! Yu Jung-Hyeok!"

He was already half-sucked into the floor by now. There wasn't even enough time to resist.

"Step back!"

The sword wind Yu Jung-Hyeok fired pushed me back. I barely managed to evade the texts trying to grab my ankles.

[Character 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', has become a part of the great story.]

Eventually, even Yu Jung-Hyeok was taken away. Han Su-Yeong was the only one remaining. However, one of her arms was already being swallowed up.

"Hurry, this way……!"

I used every ounce of my strength to pull her out. The effects of the [Way of the Wind]

permeated into my feet and the explosive forward momentum wrapped around me.

['Final Wall' is exposing its greed over your epic!]

['Final Wall' is looking at the individual not yet included in its story!]

Tsu-chuchuchut……!

Han Su-Yeong's body was trembling as if she was having a seizure.

「The only other person who wasn't a 'Character' besides himself was Han Su-Yeong.」

I ran as hard as I could. Unfortunately, the Wall's pursuit proved to be persistent.

What's worse, I had no clue where exactly I was running off to. Front, back, side, up; I looked everywhere, but couldn't see a place I could escape to.

Poof.

Along with the sensation of stepping on air, the ground vanished. This was the same tactic that took away Yi Ji-Hye and Jeong Hui-Won. The Wall was now sucking me in, too. Han Su-Yeong and I began falling as if this was an endless emptiness. The grey fog rushed in with every heavy breath I took, constricting me.

「Kim Dok-Ja was scared of the stories he didn't know.」

Texts with incredible density interfered with my breathing. I couldn't recognise this Fable due to the inordinate amount of letters. As the term implied, the 'Great' Fable

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was crushing me.

I struggled and flailed about trying to escape from this Fable somehow. However, the more I struggled, the more this vague fear dug into me. It felt like everything inside me was emptying out.

Texts were escaping from the tip of my fingers. Fables that formed the basis of me were disappearing. It was then.

「The Fables that constitute you exist through what you see, experience, and feel.」

That one sentence got stuck by my fingertip. That was the 'Fable control' method Yu Ho-Seong taught me back in the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

「Let them know that you're looking at them, too.」

I grabbed hold of that sentence. When I did, the things that constituted the Fable along with that sentence began popping up inside my head.

「Kim Dok-Ja calmly controlled his breathing.」

I decided to stop my escape attempt from this vast cosmos of texts. Fables opened their maws wide as if to swallow me up in one go.

「These things wouldn't even exist if I don't look into them.」

There was no need to fear them. These were just Fables.

Tsu-chuchuchu……!

I stared into the words rushing in. I didn't even blink and glared at those texts, to let them know that I was reading them right here.

Right next second, the words scattered around like fog, before coalescing together again.

「In order to not get devoured by the Fable, one had to become a 'dok-ja/reader'.」

As if to express their gratitude towards the one discovering them, the sentences began circling around my feet. Soon, they became footholds for me to walk on.

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「A person who loves Fables yet still reads on without getting drunk in them.」

「Only then will the Fables become viable means to oppose the formless emptiness.

」

My falling stopped. I lightly stepped on the sentences piling up below my feet. They were not the texts from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「"I'm Dok-Ja."」

「I used to introduce myself to other people in this manner, but that would lead to the following misunderstanding.」

Even then, they seemed somewhat familiar to me.

While reading those sentences, I walked forward a step at a time. Some among them were stories that I already knew, some that I didn't, and some whose memories had faded now.

「When Kim Dok-Ja was young, he began thinking about a certain thing.」

The young me was scribbling something on a notebook. It was a well-organised power balance sheet of the 'Way of Survival', as well as hidden piece locations. And also…

「What's this? I wouldn't have done it that way.」

I began cooking up my own methods of conquering the 'Ways of Survival'.

「What an idiot. You should've conquered that pitch-black place like this. The item you'll need is…… 」

「Getting the ampoules from the laboratory is the core of the cinema dungeon's conquest plan, and…… 」

「You definitely need to get the Ganpyeongui at this point in time. It's even more important than getting the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.」

The sense of deja vu grew stronger as I took more steps forward.

「There's no other choice but to kill all the Constellations. There's no other way at this point.」

「To become stronger without regressing…… 」

「As I thought, the best route is this. The first 'Great Fable' must be earned in the Demon World.」

The sentences my younger self wrote now illuminated the path I was walking on. I began thinking as I tread on those words.

「To save everyone…… 」

Maybe, this path began long before the time I could recall?

Ttuk.

Eventually, the sentences were cut off.

And a small, white door waited for me where the words had ended.

It was the exact same door the 1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok had opened.

「The [Epilogue] to the all the stories he hadn't read yet was beyond that door.」

I wordlessly stared at the doorknob.

「Just to turn this doorknob…… 」

The entire story that began with Yu Jung-Hyeok flitted in and out of my head. And in this very moment, that one question I had from a very long time ago, but never spoken out aloud, floated back up to the fore.

「What kind of an epilogue did tls123 want to write for the 'Ways of Survival'?」

I reached out towards the door's handle, only to unwittingly look behind me. There was a path made out of vast Fables. This sight felt bizarrely alien now that I looked at it from this far.

「I stared at that road for a long time.」

Then, opened the door.

Fin.

「The universe in the beginning was 'one'.」

When I regained my wits, that sentence was floating in front of my eyes. I couldn't tell whether that was just a line of text, or a memory of something taking possession of the sentence.

「The 'one' was truly omniscient and omnipotent in this world. Because, the 'one' was the universe itself, and the universe was the 'one'. The 'one' was perfect. And it was perfectly alone.」

Right after that, a blinding explosion went off.

「And that's how 'one' became 'two'.」

That was the first explosion. People, later on, would call it the Big Bang.

「'One' was no longer omnipotent afterwards.」

An incredible dizziness assaulted me, and I fell down on my hands and knees.

This was inside the door, the deepest part of the 'Final Wall'. The wall didn't try to suck me in anymore. Maybe, I had already been sucked in.

I looked around to discover Han Su-Yeong collapsed on the floor. I placed her unconscious figure on my back, and stood up. I raised my head to realise that Anna Croft was now standing before me.

[…Looks like you saw the First Fable.] The Wenny King currently possessing her was smiling in my direction. [I made the exact same face as you when I first saw it, too.]

I didn't reply. I had no time to shoot breezes with him like this. Where did my companions disappear to?

Maybe he read my anxiousness, because he continued to speak to me.

[Aren't you curious? Why does this thing called 'Fable' exist in this world?]

"……I didn't come here to discuss such things with you."

[However, it'll be impossible to go any further without talking about it first. It was the same for me, you see.]

I could hear Han Su-Yeong's breathing coming from my back. Her breaths soon became a Fable and unfolded before me. The world seemed to distort, and a passage decorated with display shelf-like things appeared next.

「The universe became 'two', and the 'one' grew lonely.」

「Things that weren't necessary back when there was only 'one' began appearing.」

Figurine-like beings were engaged in combat above these display shelves. The history of 'scenario' that began in countless planets, including Earth, was on display right there.

「The 'Good and Evil' was created to differentiate the two.」

Agares and Metatron were bitterly fighting each other. That was the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', where angels and demons, even as they bled crimson-coloured Fables, never compromised on their ideals.

「The 'communication' was invented to soothe the two's loneliness.」

Citizens were battling demons within the walls of the [Industrial Complex]. And I saw Jang Ha-Yeong trying to dissuade this battle between those walls.

「And 'Samsara', a wish to return to when it was 'one', was created.」

Next up was Sakyamuni gently stroking a certain Incarnation Body trapped within a water tank inside his chamber. It was the Incarnation Body belonging to the now-dead Tang Sanzang, who loved Sakyamuni once upon a time.

「However, 'two' could never go back to being 'one'.」

All the Fables I had been reading were displayed here.

These battles were repeating themselves within the predetermined conclusion.

Han Su-Yeong must be slowly waking back up, because I could feel her tremble a little.

「The 'two' needed something to connect the divided two. An existence that would live through all the Fables, and act as a proxy to their good and evil, their communications, and their Samsara.」

My feet came to a dead stop just then.

「The 'Character'.」

I couldn't leisurely watch on anymore.

The 'Wenny King' walking next to me like a ghost spoke up. [It's such a malicious joke, don't you agree?]

He cackled before hiding within my shadow.

The number of individuals appearing on the display cabinet grew. Some were simply put on display like some plastic figurines, while there were some still trapped in the wall with only their faces exposed as if moulding hadn't been completed yet.

"……Ji-Hye!! Yu-Seung-ah!!"

I recognised those faces.

I tried so hard to free them from there, but the more I struggled, the deeper their faces sunk into the wall.

I ran along the display shelf. Yi Seol-Hwa, Gong Pil-Du, Yi Gil-Yeong, Yu Sang-Ah……

everyone from was here. And also…

"……Yu Jung-Hyeok."

Yu Jung-Hyeok's figure revealed itself from beyond the thick fog. His entire body was currently tied up with copper-coloured chains, his eyes closed and unmoving.

And a faint silhouette could be spied below him.

「That was none other than the 'King of the Stories'.」

The fog obscured his face, so I slowly walked over to him.

[You have encountered the 'King of the Stories'!]

[End of the main scenario is here!]

There never was much info on the Dokkaebi King within the pages of the 'Ways of Survival'. However, not appearing in the novel didn't mean that no information regarding him could be found elsewhere.

Because, I knew of those that had met him already.

「However, none of them mentioned what the 'Dokkaebi King' looked like.」

At the end of the 'Final Fog', the 'King of the Stories' was waiting for me.

[The 'King of the Stories' is smiling at you.]

And then…

['The 4th Wall' is intensely trembling!]

I had to doubt my own eyes next.

「This was from a very old memory.」

The head-pounding dizziness assaulted me as my vision shook greatly.

「There is no way. No, such a thing is simply impossible.」

[Finally we meet, the apostle of ■■…… No, wait.]

Small bits of sparks danced before my eyes and removed the filtering altogether.

[Oh, the 'apostle of eternity and epilogue'.]

「Kim Dok-Ja roared out like a thunderclap and rushed forward.」

I didn't even have enough time to think. I grabbed him by the scruff of his neck. I wanted to choke him to death right here, right now – but for some reason, my hands wouldn't listen to me.

「That man was tall. He always looked down on his son from high above.」

This man, he couldn't be here.

「The man with an always-flushing face. Always drunk, and because of that, the son never really met gazes with this man. No, the son prayed that their gazes would never meet each other's.」

[Dok-Ja-ya. Kim Dok-Ja.]

「The world would turn into a nightmare if their gazes met, that's why.」

[I really did come up with a splendid name for you, didn't I?]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

I threw out a punch with all my might.

「His height that seemed so tall back then, was now about the same.」

The time seemed to be slowing down.

「Those protruding veins only served to make him look emaciated, instead.」

Tsu-chuchuchut!

「The son thought he could win now. He was not a powerless little child anymore.」

The fist I swung with all my power was stopped right before his nose.

Sparks exploding brightly illuminated the man's face. The 'Dokkaebi King', his eyes glowing bright blue, smiled like a devil at me while

standing there.

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[What do you think you're doing to your own father?]

I roared out. I was not cognizant of what I was saying nor even doing at that moment.

[The 4th Wall] was crumbling down.

"Kim Dok-Ja! Get yourself together!!"

And then, a voice could be heard.

There was this warmth still pressing onto my back. Han Su-Yeong's Fable was being transmitted to me.

「This was the dok-ja/reader's Fable.」

The story that protected me.

"The 4th Wall! What are you doing! Wake up!!"

['The 4th Wall' is strongly revitalised!]

['The 4th Wall' is growing as thick as an impregnable fortress!]

It was then the expression on the 'Dokkaebi King' changed.

[You're obstructing me?]

It seemed that he was now looking not at me, but the thing inside me.

[The last fragment of the Final Wall, your duty is now over.]

['The 4th Wall' is viciously growling!]

[You have safely reached the end of the entire story. Along with the successor that meets all the requirements.]

[The 4th Wall] was speaking from inside me.

「Th at is for Kim Dok Ja to de cide」

I gradually regained my calm while listening to those words.

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「This creature before me was not my father.」

The memories shared with my mother became a Fable and flowed right before my eyes. Her memories got swallowed up by [The 4th Wall]. Her sentences floated up above that wall and tried to speak to me.

「He died on that day.」

“……You are not my father."

[How can you be so sure?]

"Stop with your pranks. It's impossible for you to be my father, Probability-wise."

[Probability, is it? Hahah, I've no excuses after hearing that. I thought it'd be the most natural thing to see this face at this point in time.]

The Dokkaebi King smiled even as I continued to grab him by his scruff. His face then began transforming.

[In that case, how about this face?]

He morphed into my mother's appearance, and then…

[These faces aren't too bad, either.]

And then, he even changed into Persephone and Hades.

I swung my fist one more time, but my whole body was flung away in the opposite direction as powerful sparks danced in the air.

"Show me those faces one more time and I'll kill you."

[Fufu. I guess my pranks have indeed crossed the line. My bad.]

"Change back! Show me your true appearance!"

[I'd love to, but I can't. I have already forgotten what my real appearance is like a long time ago. I lived my life as far too many different beings, you see.]

He maintained Hades's appearance and slowly blinked his eyes. When he did, Fables began leaking out from behind him. Fables that were somewhat familiar.

「On that day, the world's most ancient demon ascended in awe.」

[I was a king of a Demon World once upon a time.]

「All the Archangels of ceaselessly worshipped him.」

[I was also the messiah to the Archangels.]

Cold sweat trickled down my back.

These Fables, they were stories that I had heard before.

The vanished great Demon King, the messiah of Eden – I also sensed founding Fables of other myth-level Nebulas from him, too. 's Pangu, 's Cronus……

Hairs began standing up all over my body.

This existence before my eyes was on a completely different realm compared to every other Myth-grade Constellation I had encountered so far.

「The oldest existence in this world.」

I remained tense while gripping the [Unbreakable Faith] even tighter.

"All of those things, they were your doing? Even , the , all of them? Is that what you want to tell me?"

My words prompted the 'Dokkaebi King' to vigorously shake his head.

[No. In the end, everything is simply reincarnated from the old stories. We are all nothing more than a part of the massive tale reincarnating itself. You, me.]

He was now staring at the flow of in the distance. The sky where stars had fallen was spreading out in emptiness. That sky resembled a huge wall.

The [Final Wall], that seemingly stretched on forever.

This world was, in the end, a story taking place within that vast, endless wall. I saw

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faint stars falling down like ink spilt during scribbling. So many stars had fallen by now, yet there were still some remaining up there.

Stars that couldn't be seen, unless one took a closer look. I remembered the names of those stars. And that reaffirmed what I came here to do.

"Release my companions."

[They are just the means to an end that served their purpose. What meaning is there for you if I released them?]

“……They are my everything."

The 'Dokkaebi King' slowly approached me.

Han Su-Yeong used [Midday Tryst] to talk to me as she stood at my

side.

- Kim Dok-Ja.

She tightened the tattered bandages around her arm and began rousing up the last bits of her fighting spirit.

- I'll count to three. We subdue him together on the signal. One, two…

[Stop whispering amongst yourselves. I can hear you clearly.]

We stood there frozen stiff and exchanged glances.

All settings found in had to go through the 'Dokkaebi King' first. In other words, there was no sentence in this world that he couldn't read.

Han Su-Yeong and I gripping my hilt tightly glared at him. Now that our plan had been outed, whatever we did couldn't be called a sneak attack anymore.

The 'Dokkaebi King' stared at us as if he was greatly amused, before slowly extending his hand towards me.

[The successor of the stories. Only you have arrived here at the perfect timing.]

“……Wha? Son of a bitch, can't you see that I'm also……!"

Along with the 'Tsu-chuchuchut' noise, Han Su-Yeong's voice disappeared. Trapped inside what looked like a water tank, she began pounding on the transparent walls surrounding her.

[You have cleared all the main scenarios!]

[You will be recorded in the cosmos-spanning unified .]

Accompanying the system messages was a sudden rise in the Status of my existence.

[You've already shown the world such a cool Fable, so how come you're still stuck in the old-school mentality? You are in possession of the noble wall's fragment, so I need to ask why you can't detach yourself from this world and watch it from afar?]

The owner of the voice seemed to be criticising me. His awe of all these stories could clearly be felt within the depths of that very voice.

He gazed at the wall near his position. No, more correctly, he seemed to be imagining a certain something beyond the wall itself.

[There is no meaning in the things you treasure. This world is simply a story dedicated to the great, noble existence. Everything in this world is nothing more than a fleeting daydream to the noble existence.]

The great, noble existence's daydream, was it?

"Is the [Final Wall] recording the dreams of that 'existence'?"

[Correct.]

I figured out who that existence was. The instigator of all these tragedies.

I recalled the 'First Fable' I heard when entering this place.

「The universe in the beginning was 'one'.」

The first 'one'.

The existence who regressed Yu Jung-Hyeok, and also gave birth to all the 'myths' in this world.

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"Is that bastard tls123?"

Fin.

[tls123?]

The Dokkaebi King's expression as he murmured to himself looked rather strange.

Bluish sparks were dancing on top of his lips that trembled as if he was suffering from some kind of lag.

I changed my question.

"I'm asking if that guy is the author of this world."

The Dokkaebi King tilted his head before replying.

[Rather than an author, you could say that the 'Most Ancient Dream' is much closer to being a reader. It's not an existence that writes stories for someone else. It's lazy and can be quite greedy, you see.]

The 'Most Ancient Dream' isn't 'tls123'?

If that's true, then who had been sending me the text files? The author responsible for writing the novel I had read for over ten years, just who…

[You seem to be quite curious about the beginning of everything. However, there is no meaning in trying to guess it. Doesn't matter how this world came about, if there is no one to look at it, then it's the

same thing as this world not existing in the first place.]

The 'Dokkaebi King' stared at the 's universe.

Blinding fragments of Fables rode on the stream of cosmos and flowed to somewhere.

Wherever his gaze stopped, the fragments repeatedly created meanings only to lose them again.

I shifted my own gaze towards Yu Jung-Hyeok suspended in the air with chains wrapped around him. The empty 's universe could be seen behind him.

"There are things that exist without being seen."

The darkness in the universe was simply too wide and expansive. Its vastness couldn't be crossed even with the speed of light. However, that light would eventually arrive at its destination. Unable to see it didn't mean nothing existed there. There were some things that emitted light where no one was around.

「Faint starlights could be spied within the deep darkness of the space.」

Stars that rose up among the darkness. Stars that hadn't lost themselves yet. The light from those stars became Fables – became sentences.

As those sentences were lowered on top of the Final Wall, the already-closed story's door opened up again.

「The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon raised itself up as black blood trickled out from its whole body.」

The moment I saw that sentence, I gasped out loud. The sentences soon became video footages. Not too long afterwards, I saw the

Abyssal Black Flame Dragon raise its body up within the devastated battlefield.

Han Su-Yeong was right; although he had lost the powers of the 'Apocalypse Dragon'

after the 「Stage Transformation」 came undone, he was still none other than the Black Flame Dragon.

「The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal floating in the skies of a different world opened his tired eyes, and…… 」

The Great Sage was still engaged in a bitter struggle against the surviving Constellations among the thunderclaps continuously going off.

「The final 'Great Good' was forging her way towards the end of the Good and Evil.」

And Uriel, too; she was wielding her [Flames of Conflagration] to brighten the darkened night skies of …

[No. They do not exist if no one is there to see them.]

Along with that declaration, the Fable footage scattered away.

I unknowingly reached out towards the Fable scattering in vain.

The Dokkaebi King addressed me as if to mock my actions.

[There is nothing more futile than a story continuing on when no one's reading it.

Everything is created the moment they are observed. That's how this universe has been constructed. If no one observes it, that Fable can't prove its existence.]

“……They definitely do exist."

[You still wish to see what happens next?]

[is waiting for your decision.]

[The 'Final Wall' is waiting for your decision.]

The whole world was waiting for my answer.

"I……”

I hesitated with what to say. Han Su-Yeong was still struggling within the transparent walls.

「Will I be able to see what I wanted if this Fable continues on?」

The 'Dokkaebi King' chuckled as if he could understand my hesitation.

The 'Final Wall' viciously shuddered about. Sentences were flowing above the wall; as if it was providing a free service, the Fable was lazily being reproduced once more.

The Great Sage, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, and Uriel began fighting again.

「[…… Hey, Flame Dragon-ah. Don't you dare to cry because your noona is no longer here!]」

「[Keke. You're too quick to give up, Archangel! I still have one arm left that I haven't used yet……!]」

「[But, it looks like that arm's been already sliced off, Black Flame Dragon.]」

「[This body of mine is perfectly fine without an arm, you dumb monkey!]」

The Good and Evil Constellations, and one that was neither, had gathered together and were participating in the final battle.

While watching that spectacle, the Dokkaebi King addressed me.

[Your Fable was truly amazing. Even the greatest Great Fable decided to side with you. Although many parts of your epic are still unfilled, it's more than enough to stand as the foundation for the 'beginning' of a new world.]

"I didn't continue my story just to become something like that."

Fables were shining brightly behind the Constellations.

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

Those were our Great Fables.

Fables weren't 's alone. Those that watched a certain story for a long time would eventually emit the same light as the story itself.

Constellations that had watched our story were now emitting the same light as us.

[That is the end of the story you have created.]

「The Black Flame Dragon roared out viciously as its tail was cut off.」

「Uriel's broken conflagration was scattering away like ash.」

「The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal swung his broken Ruyi Jingu Bang towards the Emperor's Constellations.」

The sentences written on the [Final Wall] were steadily losing their light. I reached

out towards that light.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[You don't have the qualification to interfere with the 'Final Wall'.]

Pain rushed in from my fingertips. Sparks had scorched them pitch-black.

I gritted my teeth and shouted out. "I do have the right to control that story! I have already cleared the main scenario."

The reward for the last scenario was the [Final Wall].

The 'Dokkaebi King' smiled. [Indeed, you do have the right. However, you don't have the authority to change that story. Doing that will violate the 'Probability'.]

I stared at the sentences floating up on the Final Wall in real-time and unleashed my true voice.

[…Stop that story, right now.]

All the Fables I had compiled until now were screeching out.

It wasn't too late. For Uriel, Black Flame Dragon, and the Great Sage, too. They were still alive.

「[Hades, our ■■ is here.]」

It could be changed if it's right now. Those flowing sentences, they could be fixed. I could grab the ends of the unfinished sentences and write something else over them.

[Do you wish to save them?] The 'Dokkaebi King' asked. [I too was like you once upon a time.]

The world he had been living in spread out from behind his back.

A planet I wasn't familiar with appeared. The scenario was underway on that planet.

[I too had experienced horrible misfortunes. Tragedies that no single existence could ever handle alone… By the time tragedies no longer felt like tragedies to me, I found

myself arriving in this place.]

Like a dam bursting open, a portion of the wall rained down on me. The enormous story held in the Final Wall's embrace began flooding in towards me.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchuchu…!!

My mind felt like it was breaking down.

The stories that I already knew, and those that I didn't – Fables of the whole universe was accumulating within my soul.

['The 4th Wall' is violently resisting!]

['The 4th Wall' is protecting your crumbling mind!]

The deaths I had experienced, and the deaths I had witnessed, were overlapping with each other.

[Why did so many bad things happen to you?]

These stories that could easily be categorised as misfortunes began crushing down inside my head.

[Do not get drunk in the Fables. Because, this is merely one of the countless worldlines you will create in the future, after all.]

Little by little, the emotion of sadness grew dull. Lamentation and despair, too. All these emotions of sorrow were lumped into one clay-like mass, and became something that couldn't be differentiated.

「So many misfortunes exist in this world, so is there a reason to feel

sorrow for every single one of them? 」

Far too many things would grow stale eventually.

[You asked me who was the author of this world. You can be that existence.] The

'Dokkaebi King' continued on. [If you wish to save them, you must acknowledge the fact that everything you love has no meaning, that the already-written Fables are simply illusions that can be changed easily, and that they are just shadows of the great,

noble daydream.]

Along with the Dokkaebi King's whisper, the Great Fable's Probability began shifting.

[Become the architect of the brand new world, so that you can lead the next generation of .]

It was an incredibly tempting offer. If I accepted the Dokkaebi King's suggestion and become the new architect of the , then I'd be able to save everyone. I'd get to save this world-line by rewriting all these Fables.

And there was only one price to pay for that salvation.

「To give up loving that story. 」

It was then, someone grabbed my hand. It was soaked in blood as if it had been hitting something for a while.

It was a hand of someone who had been writing stories for a very long time.

“……Wake up, will ya? You are not a writer."

When did she escape from the transparent walls? Han Su-Yeong spoke to me while tearing the bandages with her teeth and wrapping them around her fists again.

"No, you're a reader who promised to become the first reader of my novel."

At the end of her words, Fables exploded out from her entire figure.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The sentences written on the [Final Wall] began growing restless.

[Incarnation, 'Han Su-Yeong', is activating her attribute!]

"Even if there are lots of tragedies in the world, a sad thing is still sad, you dumbass!"

The moment Han Su-Yeong slammed down on the floor, a portion of Fable clinging

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onto the [Final Wall] tumbled down.

The Dokkaebi King's eyes grew wider. [… The Wall, you dare……!]

He couldn't finish what he wanted to say.

Because, someone's hand broke past the gap of the Wall where the Fables had fallen down. It was a smooth, pale-skinned hand. A hand of a certain someone who was more righteous and stronger than anyone I knew.

"She's right. Sorrow is still sorrow. Just like how happiness is still happiness."

[The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' is distorting the gap in the 'Final

Wall'.]

Yu Sang-Ah and her refreshing smile was escaping from the wall. Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong sticking close to her side could be seen, as well.

"Ahjussi!"

"Hyung!"

The rift Yu Sang-Ah created spread out wider and wider, and eventually, even reached the wall on the other side. And the voices of people I knew well could be heard coming from beyond that wall.

[The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' is raising the volume of the inaudible voice.]

"De-mon-King-of-Sal-va-tion!!"

It was Jang Ha-Yeong's voice. Along with crumbling noises, something small popped out from the opposite wall's gap. It was Kyrgios.

"You pathetic fool. Did you get swallowed by a measly little Fable?"

Soon afterwards, noises akin to a bulldozer flattening the ground resounded out as a man-sized hole appeared in that gap.

[The 'Wall that Decides Good and Evil' is re-establishing the boundary between Good and Evil!]

"Dok-Ja-ssi! We came to find you!"

It was Yi Hyeon-Seong and Jeong Hui-Won.

The gap where my companions popped out rapidly recovered. Stories recorded on the

[Final Wall] were quickly filling it up. And the stories of the stars

began streaming again above the Wall.

"Dok-Ja-ssi? Just what is…?"

"Hyeon-Seong-ssi!! Over there!"

Jeong Hui-Won's voice prompted all my companions to look at the [Final Wall].

Stories of the Constellations still fighting inside the closed-off cabin was being displayed there.

It was a hellish landscape where the dead easily outnumbered the living. Uriel was kneeling down, and the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was collapsing. The Great Sage was fighting right until the very end to protect them.

「[Stand up, maknae's story hasn't ended yet.]」

Sentences continued to just stream by.

At this rate, they would all die. Uriel, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, even the Great Sage, they would all die.

While still being subjected to intense pain, I reached out towards them. Pain severe enough to almost completely take over my soul meant I couldn't speak nor use my true voice.

「St op it」

['The 4th Wall' is speaking in your stead.]

「St op th at st ory fr om con ti nuing on」

Companions dashed towards the [Final Wall].

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Even if I didn't say anything to them, they already knew what they needed to do. That story wasn't over yet. If only we could prevent the

next sentences from being written……

Tsu-chuchuchuchu!

The violent aftermath's storm burned away at the companions. The Dokkaebi King's power was suppressing them. Despite that, they didn't stop. They endured against the blinding sparks dancing all over their bodies and walked forward a step at a time in their own paces.

[All Fables of refuse to be recorded on the 'Final Wall'!]

Fables we had created were speaking up now.

The 'Dokkaebi King' muttered as if he was replying to them. [… I see. So, you still wish to carry on with the scenario, is that it?]

He then stared at me as if he was rather amused by this. The moment I met his gaze, goosebumps broke out all over my skin.

The 'Dokkaebi King' was the strongest existence in this world-line. No Myth-grade Constellation could ever contend with this creature. Everything within

was nothing more than some toys to him, after all.

With a single wave of his hand, the new scenario's contents floated on the [Final Wall].

['s Final Scenario is being reset!]

['s Final Scenario will be……]

CRAAACK!

The streaming sentence came to a sudden stop.

A single sword was stabbing into the spot where the sentence had been cut off. The aura containing the ominous power of Chaos was disrupting the order of the sentence.

And then, a new sentence was generated, instead.

「The sole existence who had seen the end of this world after wandering for the

inordinate amount of time.」

The broken chains clanged in the empty air. Shadows from countless regression turns were overlapping on top of a certain black coat as if thousands of afterimages were gathering as one.

Right at that moment, I realised that my judgement was wrong.

「There is. One person, who did.」

A being who had already killed the 'Dokkaebi King' before.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

Fin.

「A man named Yu Jung-Hyeok was there.」

From the 0th turn all the way to 1863rd.

The history compiled by Yu Jung-Hyeok overlapped with the ends of his coat and whipped about wildly. As if to speak up for his Fable, his words floated up on the [Final Wall].

「"I will never forget. Not even one thing."」

[Fable, 'Comrade of Life and Death's' special effect is currently in activation!]

The Fables of the 3rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok and the Secretive Plotter's were resonating together.

Terrifyingly-resplendent powers of Chaos extended out from the tip of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] buried deeply in the wall. The entire wall seemed to grow restless from the disorderly aura of Chaos.

That was obvious, though; his story should be occupying the most important part of this wall, after all.

The protagonist of the 「Three Ways to Survive a Destroyed World」, Yu Jung-Hyeok.

This whole world couldn't even have gotten started without him in the first place.

The Dokkaebi King spoke up as if to ridicule him.

[Oh, the puppet of the Most Ancient Dream. Your film is truly lengthy and extensive.]

He sounded as if he already had predicted this appearance.

[No one could have accompanied you in your boring and unwieldy story. Even if it was the 'Most Ancient Dream'.]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly blinked, and the [Sage's Eye] was unleashed along with a radiant golden light. His eye glowed brightly as if it had absorbed every starlight existing in this world.

The owner of that eye spoke up.

[[Have I come too early this time as well?]]

The moment I heard the Secretive Plotter, I recalled a certain memory I saw through the [Disconnected Film Theory]. A memory from the 1863rd turn when he encountered the 'Dokkaebi King'.

「[Oh, dear unfortunate puppet. You have arrived too early. You can't complete this universe.]」

The 'Dokkaebi King' tilted his head as that memory was transmitted to him in real-time and muttered out. [Is that what happened? I see, the me of the different worldline told you such a thing.]

[[Your manner of speech is different from the one I met.]]

[Just like how your regression turns aren't the same, I too am different.]

The 'Dokkaebi King' shrugged his shoulders as if he found something rather amusing.

Then, he yanked out Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and threw it back. The latter caught the flying sword with his bare hand.

Only the sword scar remained on the [Final Wall] like a cursor. Soon, though, the scar was gradually forced close, and sentences appeared on the wall's surface.

「However, all these world-lines existed for the sake of treading the same path.」

The 'Dokkaebi King' addressed Yu Jung-Hyeok while sounding immensely proud of this story. [The completion of the great, noble world is at hand. You shall be able to fulfil your long-cherished wish now.]

I knew very well what Yu Jung-Hyeok's wish was.

[Great Fable, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

And that was to be freed from the chains of this horrifying curse. The 1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok only lived on for that very purpose.

「However, his aim wasn't only that.」

The 'Secretive Plotter' turned his head to look at me. The meaning behind that stare was rather obvious – he was telling me not to forget the deal I made with him.

「"I shall kill the culprit of all these worlds."」

The 'Dokkaebi King' read that sentence floating above the [Final Wall] and muttered out. [Kill, is it… How amusing. Do you still believe such a thing is possible?]

[[Of course, it is. And to make it possible……]]

A pair of swords were now held in his hands.

The pitch-black blade of the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] was now joined by the chillingly-pale blade of [Heaven Shaking Sword].

[[… You, bastard, need to disappear first.]]

Along with a loud 'Ka-boom!', sparks began pounding the entire Wall as if to break it down. An explosion of light occurred right afterwards, revealing two figures locked in combat mid-air.

I saw the sturdy barrier-like wall of the Fable surrounding the 'Dokkaebi King'. He was an existence that used the oldest stories in this world as weapons.

[Great Fable, 'First Messiah', has begun its storytelling!]

The Fable in possession of the master of Nebula was now streaming out from his fingertips.

Sentences tightly coagulating scattered sacred light around. The light from a great Constellation was now raining down on all the creations on the ground. There was no

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doubt that anything touched by that Status would melt away without a trace.

"Dok-Ja-ssi!!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong freaked out and hurriedly ran towards where I was. Forged steel extending from his body spread out to protect me and the companions. However, I simply shook my head.

"There is no need, Hyeon-Seong-ssi."

"Pardon?"

Instead of a reply, I simply pointed to the front.

Even as the pulsing migraine continued to assault me, I didn't stop looking at the view unfolding before my eyes.

Other stars were right. I too, might be nothing more than a mere Constellation. Maybe, I endured over a dozen-plus years to witness this spectacle.

[Exclusive attribute, 'Terror of the Stars', is activating!]

The brilliant radiance of the Dokkaebi King was splitting apart. A man wearing a black coat was using two swords to defend against the light of messiah capable of ending all evil in this world.

Tsu-zuzuzuzu……!

The Fables on the Wall melted down as the light touched them.

The 'Secretive Plotter', no, Yu Jung-Hyeok, was walking forward step by step while scything past that light. Sweat drops formed and dripped down from the end of his chin, and the edges of [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and [Heaven Shaking Sword]

grew increasingly dull from the light, yet he didn't back away, not even once.

This caused the Dokkaebi King's expression to shift gradually.

[As expected. How about this, then?]

[Great Fable, 'First Evil', has begun its storytelling!]

The First Evil. That was the Fable of 'Baal', the great Demon King who had ascended to heaven. It was the absolute power that no Good in this world could ever dare to oppose.

Now carrying the entirety of the Demon World on its back, the Dokkaebi King dropped a pitch-black bolt of lightning on Yu Jung-Hyeok. It was the thunderclap from the corrupted heaven that no Archangel could withstand.

Yi Seol-Hwa cried out in the distance. "Jung-Hyeok-ssi!!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't avoid the incoming lightning bolt. No, he instead raised his sword up like a lightning rod and faced the attack head-on. That wasn't the end, however.

[The 「Stage Transformation」 is activating!]

Through the Stage Transformation, souls of Demon Kings were being revived. There were some that died by our hands, while some were

killed off by the Apocalypse Dragon. All Demon Kings had been summoned to the battlefield once more by the

'First Evil', and they were now howling towards Yu Jung-Hyeok and me.

Gu-waaaaaah!!

The weapons thrown by the Demon Kings were enveloped in the malevolent magical energy, creating a purple-coloured storm of lightning. It was so powerful that not even a Myth-grade Constellation would be able to withstand it.

As the lightning flooded in, Yu Jung-Hyeok's pale face was illuminated like an evil apparition. He remained utterly calm even as the ominous storm of Status raged on.

Just like someone who had been waiting for this very moment for a long time.

[[They are all bastards that I've killed before.]]

[Exclusive attribute, 'Demon King Slayer', is activating!]

Yu Jung-Hyeok leapt into the air and marched forward while deflecting the incoming weapons. Everywhere his swords drew arcs, Fables of evil crumbled down.

Like a monster born only to destroy, he swung his swords again and again. Every single one of his sword strikes contained the resentment of the worlds he had lived in.

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Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

A huge rift was opening up in the corrupted skies of the Demon World.

The martial prowess powerful enough to dissolve the 「Stage Transformation」 all by himself; the monster created by was now working towards destroying

itself.

Guwaaaaahk!

The blade of [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] cut off the head of the revived 'Black-mane lion' Marbas, while the [Heaven Shaking Sword]'s trajectory pierced past the heart of the 'Merciless hunter going against heaven's will', Barbatos.

No Demon King could announce themselves as a king in front of this man.

The Dokkaebi King growled and shouted out as if he too had finally acknowledged the threat. [You arrogant puppet……! You are not the protagonist of this world-line!]

At the same time, the surrounding terrain began changing again.

[Great Fable, 'Star Stream Game System', has begun its storytelling!]

[The 「Stage Transformation」 is activating!]

The Wall's appearance was changing as if pixels were breaking apart.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's figure seemingly grew smaller and smaller. The path he needed to tread became a maze, as if he was now trapped within the 'maze of Daedalus'. Even a monster with a large mouth chasing after him could be seen, too. [Automated turrets]

suddenly popping from here and there began firing at him, while the ground his feet landed on morphed into a deep quagmire.

It was as if he had entered a video game.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok was laughing.」

[Exclusive attribute, 'Ruler of Games', is activating!]

He overcame the exceedingly-simple traps and flung himself forward like an arrow. He

tore the approaching monster's head off, then proceeded to utterly destroy the maze's walls.

As if he already knew the method of clearing this world, he didn't even permit a single attack to land on him.

[Applicable 'stage' cannot deal with the target's Status!]

The maze collapsed, and Yu Jung-Hyeok was already standing right before the Dokkaebi King. The latter's eyes were now dyed in the colours of fluster.

[[Is that all?]]

It was only obvious why the 'Secretive Plotter' would win against the 'Dokkaebi King', however.

His whole life existed solely to fight and win against . He must've killed the Dokkaebi King in a similar manner during the portion of the original I didn't get to read.

The latter was hastily retreating, his eyes now shifting towards me.

「What is Yu Jung-Hyeok's weakness?」

The moment I read that sentence floating above the [Final Wall], the back of my neck grew icy-cold.

The sights of a different world-line were projected onto the Dokkaebi King's irises.

Memories not from this world, but another world-line was currently entering him.

He stopped looking at me as if he had found the right answer, and with a chilling smile, shifted his gaze back to Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[Oh, dear puppet. Is your mind as sharp as your sword, I wonder?]

[The 'King of Stories' is forcibly reproducing your Fable!]

[The 「Stage Transformation」 is activating temporarily!]

[The similarity of the surrounding terrain is greatly enhancing the level of stage's

reproduction!]

Corpses of Demon Kings were strewn about everywhere. Yu Jung-Hyeok and his devastated expression standing on top of dead Constellations and Demon Kings, was now slowly taking in the surroundings.

「The final world he used to live in was now unfolding in this place.」

There was no way he didn't recognise this 'world'. It was none other the 'Secretive Plotter' himself who had sent me to that place, after all.

「The 1863rd regression turn. The last world of the 'Ways of Survival'.」

The Dokkaebi King approached Yu Jung-Hyeok like an encroaching shadow as the latter dazedly looked up at the sky. No, he was no longer the 'Dokkaebi King'. With every step he took, his face and his silhouette changed.

「The pale cheeks; two eyes gleaming like stars, were now looking at him.」

The white coat perfectly matching mine was dancing in the wind.

[Do you remember it? Back in the 33rd regression turn. What Yi Ji-Hye said after clearing the 40th scenario?]

A voice exactly the same as mine was now speaking up.

Sparks danced in the air as Yu Jung-Hyeok's body froze up stiffly.

The Dokkaebi King easily reached out and grabbed hold of Yu Jung-Hyeok's collars before continuing on.

[Now, remember. You weren't always unhappy, right? In all the regression turns, there were always moments of happiness, even if they didn't last long.]

Both the [Heaven Shaking Sword] and the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] trembled powerfully. And in the midst of the tremor, they drooped powerlessly.

「The regression depression.」

That was the only weakness of Yu Jung-Hyeok, who had repeatedly regressed for a

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very long time.

[In the 173rd turn. You managed to protect Earth for a pretty long time. You got to see Yi Ji-Hye receive her high school diploma, and you even got to see Yi Seol-Hwa smile with another's child in her arms.]

The light in Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes was wavering.

「It wasn't despair that could defeat Yu Jung-Hyeok.」

「Small feather-like memories settled down inside his head one by one.」

The 'Dokkaebi King' was using the exact same method I relied on back then.

「The breathing got harder, and the lungs were getting tighter.」

「A man drowning in water would sink even deeper under the surface from the weight of a mere feather.」

I couldn't afford to idly watch on anymore. I shouted at Yu Jung-Hyeok, telling him to wake up, and not to fall for such an illusion.

However, my voice couldn't reach them as if a non-conductive barrier was set up between us. And the 'Dokkaebi King' was smiling away, perhaps to mock this entire story.

[Yu Jung-Hyeok, have you protected all that you wanted to protect?]

Slowly, Yu Jung-Hyeok's knees sank down.

I roused the Status of Fables. I needed to undo that 「Stage Transformation」 right now, But, how should I…

Grab.

There was a hand still tightly clutching mine. It was Han Su-Yeong.

"That's not a battle you can interfere in."

"But, if he's left alone……!"

"……Even a star that can't be seen still emits light. You said that, right?"

…A star that can't be seen?

Her words made me look back at Yu Jung-Hyeok once more.

His gaze being lowered had come to a stop. Blinding sparks were completely enveloping him.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu……

Something was waking up his fading consciousness.

[Great Fable, 'Ones that Remember the Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

That was a Fable I wasn't aware of.

As the sparks lessened gradually, several silhouettes revealed themselves. Now that I took a closer look, Yu Jung-Hyeok wasn't alone. No, four others were standing beside him.

A tall man, a young man with blonde hair, a girl with a ponytail, and finally…

[[He couldn't protect anyone. That's why he now stands in this place.]]

…An Archangel with blindingly-pure wings.

Astonishment quickly dyed the Dokkaebi King's expression.

The Fable from the destroyed 999th turn was now burning brightly like the conflagration of end times on the edges of the Archangel's blade.

[[Because he believes there are still things left to protect.]]

Fin.

The Dokkaebi King's brows quivered. The Fables from the 999th regression turn were now looming before him.

The Fables discarded by had begun telling their stories one by one.

They were waking Yu Jung-Hyeok up from the depth of 'regression depression'.

The 'Dokkaebi King' frowned deeply next. [Why are you here? Did you not make a deal with me? You don't have a pretext to help him.]

Sentences began floating up above the [Final Wall].

「We made a deal with the Dokkaebi King, you see? If we destroy this world-line, he will send us back. He will get in touch with your Sponsor, the 'Most Ancient Dream', and…… 」

Those were the words of the 999th turn Yi Ji-Hye.

The 'Dokkaebi King' spoke once more. [It was I who summoned you all to this world.

Do you wish to be cast out of the world-line again? I ask you, do you wish to taste the everlasting pain while wandering the horrifying gap between dimensions without an end in sight?]

His words continued on as if to threaten them.

[This 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is the enemy you've been searching for. He's the very culprit who destroyed your world-line, the one who thrust your Fables into misery.]

There was a slight hint of agitation on the expressions of the 'Outer Gods'.

The 'Dokkaebi King' was right; just like how it was with Yu Jung-Hyeok, they too came this far to settle the score from the world they used to live in.

It was then, someone opened his mouth.

[[What dogshit are you yapping on about? It's you, asshole, who dropped us into this damn game, isn't it? If the scenarios didn't start in the first place, would I even be standing here doing this shit?]]

The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon spoke with a thuggish attitude. As if he had already finished making up his mind, truly incredible power of Chaos was being unleashed from his entire figure.

[Great Fable, 'Delusional Design', has begun its storytelling!]

[[Keuh-euh, it's been so long since we fought together.]]

Kim Nam-Woon cackled as he undid the bandages from his hands.

He was a monster that even surpassed his own sponsor, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.

His pitch-black obsidian hand, filled to the brim with thicker, more evil aura than anything Han Su-Yeong could ever produce, began sucking in the 's night.

[Great Fable, 'Heart Sealing the Sorrow', has begun its storytelling!]

Right behind him, there was another man raising his huge figure up as well. It was the 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong, the 'King of Silverlight Heart'.

The completed 'Fable metal' armour wrapped around his entire figure.

[[Dokkaebi King, I'm excluded from that deal since I have never agreed to it.]]

Next up, the 'Master of the Sunken Island', 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye summoned her gigantic battleship up in the air.

[Great Fable, 'Wanderer of the Eternal Horizon', has begun its storytelling.]

The atmosphere of the great ocean could be felt from her Twin Dragon Sword.

[[……]]

She wordlessly unsheathed her sword and protected Yu Jung-Hyeok's right side. With

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that, the kings' decision became clear.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint', is forcibly activating!]

Their thoughts and determination were being transmitted to me in full.

They all hated the 'Secretive Plotter'. However, that hatred was born out from the deep-seated yearning they all held.

「No one treasured 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' as much as them in any of the universes out there.

」

It was all thanks to Yu Jung-Hyeok that they got to reach this far. To make sure they would reach here, the 999th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok sacrificed everything of him.

His arm was cut off, his legs were torn off, he lost both of his eyes, and in the end, he even sacrificed his life, too.

「It was Yu Jung-Hyeok who saved them, and killed them.」

They only lived for Yu Jung-Hyeok; how could people like them ever forget about him?

The wrath that had to be chained within the sinking island, the sorrow

that could only be endured after turning your heart into steel; the pain that could only be forgotten by throwing yourself into the abyss.

[Great Fable, 'Flame of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

And the ache that could only be appeased by burning oneself away. They repeatedly connected the film that threatened to be cut off at any time, and eventually reached the final pages of the story.

[[Step aside, Dokkaebi King. We only want one thing.]] The 999th turn's Uriel, the

'Living Flame', spoke up. [[And that is to witness the 'end' we didn't get to confirm back in our world-line.]]

At the end of her words, the [Flames of Conflagration] moved.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

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The [Hellflame] that utterly devastated the N'Gai's Forest was now burning the interior of the Wall. Almost at the same time, the right hand of the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon stabbed into the Dokkaebi King's thigh.

[[Hahaha! Let's kill a Dokkaebi for a change!]]

Kim Nam-Woon's madness-filled Stigma sliced past the time and space, destroyed Fables, and aimed at the Dokkaebi King's figure.

The two exchanged the exact amount of Fables during their attacks and defences; weapons created from the delusion grew out of Kim Nam-Woon's right arm, while Star Relics summoned by the 'Dokkaebi King' appeared from several spots of the Wall and blocked off the former's weapons.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

The [Final Wall] was the location where the Dokkaebi King's Fable could display the greatest level of power. With the stage being what it was, the direction of the battle soon flowed disadvantageously for Kim Nam-Woon.

「Oh, the spear that rips the oceans apart and draws the borders in the seas.」

「Oh, the arrow that shot down the eye of the sun.」

Sentences leaking out from several spots on the Wall soon became reality.

Shu-shushushuk!

The Star Relics matched the Dokkaebi King's signal and flew in, turning the entire figure of the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss' into Swiss cheese; a spear stabbed into his thigh, while the arrow pierced into his arm. However, even as the pitch-black Fable dripped out from him, Kim Nam-Woon was grinning.

[[Go! Taekwon Hyeon-Seong!]]

Along with Kim Nam-Woon's cry, a figure taking the spot behind him rose up.

Kwa-dudududu……

It was the 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong. His powerful, sturdy arms wrapped tightly

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around the Dokkaebi King, then forged steel occupying the space grew out from his entire body. As the powerful sparks exploded, the steel tightly secured the Dokkaebi King's arms and legs.

[[Ji-Hye-ya!]]

At the end of the 999th turn Yi Hyeon-Seong's signal, the 'Master of the Sunken Island', made her move.

[[Load the cannon.]]

A massive battleship floating in the night sky could be spied within the Wall's gap created by the impact with the ark. Along with a powerful whirlpool swirling about, something was being loaded in front of the ship. The Status emitted from there was more than enough to blow up a planet in its entirety. When taking a closer look, it was not a shell that had been loaded into the gigantic cannon.

[[Fire!!]]

And while issuing a huge explosion noise, a shooting star fired out from the ship. It was the 'Living Flame', descending like a star with a blindingly bright tail behind her back.

She had willingly become a bullet and now, was flying straight at the 'Dokkaebi King'.

The 999th turn's Uriel shot forward in a shocking turn of speed while melting everything getting in her way. The 999th turn's Fable concentrated on the tip of her sword began burning up violently.

[[It's not only the Conquering King that have killed you before.]]

「This was the method the 999th turn's characters used to clear the final pages.」

The incandescent sun shattered the Wall's exterior and advanced forward. Fables clinging onto the Final Wall writhed in pain from that incredible heat.

This was the attack that no one in this world-line could possibly defend against.

「Yet, the 'Dokkaebi King' was doing exactly that against such an attack.」

Creaaaaaaaaak-!!

The Dokkaebi King's eyes glowed sharply under the hellish heat.

Ah, aaaaaaah!

Countless Stigmata engraved on his body screeched out. They were texts seemingly taken from the [Final Wall]. Great Fables began directing their exaltation towards them.

Even the Fables in my possession were getting agitated, as well.

「The Modifier 'King of the Stories' was not just for a show.」

The 'King of the Stories' that existed at the peak of . His face looked noble, evil, beautiful and sorrowful all at the same time.

「Once upon a time he too was a human.」

The weapons pouring out from the [Final Wall] collided with the [Flames of Conflagration], and…

「He was a demon.」

The ash-coloured Fable leaking out from the Dokkaebi King's horn stopped the approaching Uriel's movement.

「He was a saviour, and… 」

The divine light emitted from white wings restored the Dokkaebi King's stamina.

「And eventually, an existence that became a Dokkaebi.」

The unending Fables began enveloping him. As if, this world couldn't end in this place.

「This place was not the 999th turn.」

I sensed the 999th turn's characters now shifting their gazes in my direction.

「Now, make your move.」

「You must be the one to finish it.」

「You haven't forgotten your promise with us, yes?」

Unfortunately, I couldn't move.

[Great Fable, 'Guardian of the World', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Guardian of the World', is now looking at the next Guardian!]

Because the Dokkaebi King's Fable was also looking directly at me.

[…Kim Dok-Ja!!] The Dokkaebi King shouted in my direction. [Do not go against your predetermined destiny. You love the Fables more than anyone in this world. I too was like you. I understand the feelings you have towards this world better than anyone in this universe!]

The Fable extending from his body reached out towards me.

Han Su-Yeong next to me covered my ears and growled angrily. "Don't listen to him.

It's not even worth it hearing him out."

Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Hyeon-Seong stood before me, while Yu Sang-Ah, Shin Yu-Seung, and Yi Gil-Yeong stood around me to protect me. And from behind my back, the howl from Yi Ji-Hye's sword resounded out.

[All the stars in the Nebula are shining brightly!]

However, there were some things that would become more visible the harder you tried to obscure them. Some words would become clearer the more you tried to cover them up.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint', is going out of control!]

「[Black Flame Dragon! Black Flame Dragon! Goddammit, open your eyes already!!]

」

「[Kim Yu-Shin! Wake up! Our Hwangsanbeol is not yet……]」

「[Great Sage!]」

Those were Fables streaming on the [Final Wall].

Constellations were collapsing on the battlefield where an even fiercer battle than ours was taking place. Fables were endlessly leaking out from the Great Sage's body, now tattered to resemble a torn rag. As if he had lost both of his eyes, his once-blinding

'Golden Gaze Fiery Eyes' were currently not emitting any light.

「[…… I can't see my maknae all that well.]」

Uriel was supporting him. The Archangel with both of her wings torn off held his hand and stroked the nightscape.

「[He's alive. There he is, still shining.」

The Constellations still doggedly surviving until now rushed towards them from among the chaotic night sky.

The scene then changed to show Persephone embracing the fallen Hades. He was trying to say something, but she simply shook her head.

「[Do not worry, my ancient night.]」

's sun was setting above her head.

All these endings became wretched sentences and rushed above the Wall. These sentences were being written only for the purpose of

finishing them off.

[Do you not wish to save them?]

I felt vomit rising up from the deepest part of my body.

The 'Dokkaebi King' shouted out. [The current you can't save them. The one who loves the story can never change that very story.]

Can't change it, because you loved it.

[Only the one who overcomes the story, the one who understands the trivial nature of everything, can escape from the suppression of the Probability.]

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The surrounding storm of aftermaths was growing even more vicious, accompanied by the 'Kka-gagagaghk!' noise. The power of the Fables flowing out from the 'Dokkaebi King' was gradually overwhelming the combined might of the 999th turn's characters.

The Dokkaebi King tore off Yi Hyeon-Seong's Fable metal and extended his hand in my direction.

[The 'One Single Fable' you have compiled is more than enough to inherit the position of . Take my hand. What you want is the same as what I want. I do not wish to see the stories of those stars be erased.]

His voice even sounded desperate, too. The light in his eyes and his Fable all acted as proof of his sincerity.

The 's Fable glowed brightly from his figure.

「The story he had been reading for a long time had eventually become a part of him.

」

He was now the itself.

He genuinely didn't want this story to end.

[Continue with…… this story. Become the protagonist of a new world-line, and along with the Fable you have created, continue the banquet of the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

You are the existence born solely for that purpose. You were able to reach this far, only for that purpose!]

While listening to those words, I began recalling all the lucky moments that happened to me so far.

[is looking at you.]

Why was the 's Probability so generous towards me?

The Dokkaebi King's Fable was telling me the reason for that. The lights continued to explode before my eyes.

[Do not forget what you truly want. You're not the 'last verse'. No, you're the 'Eternity'!]

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The Constellations' Fables streamed behind the Dokkaebi King.

He was right. I didn't wish for those stories to end.

「The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal watched the falling star and sensed his own approaching demise.」

I slowly turned my head around and saw Yu Jung-Hyeok, now almost freed from the

'regression depression'. His seemingly-empty eyes were locked on me.

「However, there were some stories that had to end.」

Fin.

That was an old promise.

「"I'll finish your story for you."」

I couldn't keep that promise during the 1863rd turn.

[Your ■■ has begun shaking unsteadily!]

I pushed myself up while gripping the [Unbreakable Faith] tightly. The hilt of the sword that accompanied me from beginning till now through almost all the scenarios, could be felt in my hand.

The tip of the sword touched the ground and sentences began rising up. Sentences that I had never seen before.

「He was more curious about the end of this world than anyone, and… 」

「And more than anyone else, he wished for this world not to end.」

My last Fable had begun.

“……Kim Dok-Ja?"

I removed Han Su-Yeong's hands covering my ears.

Her eyes were trembling. My reddened appearance was reflected in her irises. A lengthy wound was running across my cheek; wings were torn, and the Demon King's horn was broken. I was truly in a mess.

And Han Su-Yeong believed in such a mess of a man until now and came this far.

[Have you made up your mind?]

The Dokkaebi King in the centre of all the exploding sparks asked me.

The beings from the 999th turn, the 'Outer God Kings', were doing whatever they could to fight back. The battle so far had been evenly matched, but judging from the direction of the storm of the Probability's aftermath blowing in, it should be the 999th side falling into a disadvantage in the end.

"That's right." I replied to the Dokkaebi King. "I shall cross the 'Final Wall.' And then, meet the one behind it."

The culprit of all these tragedies, the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

"I'll meet that guy, and stop all of this world's tragedies."

The 'Dokkaebi King' grinned as if he was satisfied with my decision.

[Indeed. Very good. That's eminently possible when you become my successor. Now, come this way. Hurry, and inherit the 's will……]

"I never said I'll take you up on your offer."

I activated [Way of the Wind] and the [Lightning Transformation] at

the same time.

This world's fastest movement technique was soon enveloped by the pure-white electrical energy, transforming my body into a single streak of light beam. With the fastest speed I could ever produce, I shot past both the Dokkaebi King and the Outer Gods.

The destination I chose was the deepest part of the [Final Wall].

[You……!!]

I heard the stunned voice of the Dokkaebi King. I also saw the sentences dashing across above the [Final Wall] in the distance.

「The place where the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's last scale, and Uriel's last feather, had fallen.」

I roared out in panic and dashed towards that very sentence.

「The place where Persephone's last teardrop had fallen.」

I needed to stop those sentences from finishing. Even if I saw the end of this world, I must never let those words come to an end.

Perhaps he had realised my intentions, the Dokkaebi King was shouting out in sheer astonishment.

[No, stop! You are not a permitted being yet! You can't even touch that Wall, let alone cross it!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

The moment he was finished, the storm of the Probability's aftermath suppressed my entire body. The sparks exploded with enough force to utterly crush my Incarnation Body right down its atoms, and for a moment there, the inside of my head blanked out from the pain.

[The 'Final Wall' is rejecting your approach!]

The Wall was rejecting me.

It was stopping me from touching its sentences, to change them, and even from crossing over it. As if I couldn't even be permitted to reach it at all.

In an instant, the words on the Wall widened the space, and retreated to a far-off distance.

「Those sentences weren't Kim Dok-Ja's.」

Powerful gusts of wind knocked me off my feet. I was like some words cast out to the distant empty blankness, miserably rolling on the ground towards my rear. Then, my back collided with something while issuing a loud 'thud!'

"You idiot! You think you can achieve something by rushing out all alone??"

It was Han Su-Yeong. I replied to her with a grin.

"I wasn't rushing forward alone."

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The 's members were running towards us from behind.

I didn't want to lose anyone. I simply couldn't afford to lose anyone.

"Dok-Ja-ssi! Keep running!"

Jeong Hui-Won, her [Hour of Judgement] activated, rushed towards us while scattering the reddish glow from her eyes.

Yi Hyeon-Seong and Yi Ji-Hye were positioned either side of her, while Yu Sang-Ah and the kids were right behind them. Meanwhile, Jang Ha-Yeong and our masters were taking up the rear of the group.

"Take this with you! It's the last Life and Death Pill!"

Yi Seol-Hwa couldn't come with us because of Gong Pil-Du, so she threw the pillbox at us, instead. I took a [Life and Death Pill] out right away and swallowed it. My wrecked Incarnation Body began recovering rapidly.

[Stop!!]

Along with the Dokkaebi King's cry, bizarre-looking creatures revealed themselves from among the contexts of the paragraphs recorded on the Wall. They were 'Outer Gods', too – beings that hadn't earned Fables worthy enough to be recorded on the Wall.

[[■■■!!▪▪▪ ▪▪▪ ▪▪▪!!]]

Not all Outer Gods followed their kings. There definitely existed some that chose to become the Dokkaebi King's underlings despite possessing great powers themselves, and voluntarily worked as the slaves of the scenarios.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!!

[Stop them! If you do, I shall record your Fables on the 'Final Wall'!]

Our martial art masters discovered tentacles rushing in from all directions and unsheathed their weapons.

"Leave this place to us."

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The Breaking the Sky Saint's [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] and Kyrgios's [Purest Sword Force] combined into a single ray of light, and engraved their sentences over the Wall.

[Great Fable, 'The 1st Murim', has begun its storytelling!]

Two greatest experts of Murim stopped the tentacles and a desperate

struggle soon ensued. Unfortunately, the time they could buy was only for a fleeting moment.

There were simply far too many 'Outer Gods' flooding out from the 'context' the Dokkaebi King had opened up.

[All Fables of are emitting bright light!]

We couldn't afford to waste the time our masters bought for us. The Wall's surface recording Uriel's and the Great Sage's Fables had already grown that far away.

There could only be one answer. We needed to approach it fast than its retreating speed. But, how could we……

It was right around then a certain paragraph floated up on the [Final Wall].

「To think that a 'Green Zone' is located on a wall… To begin with, people were responsible for attaching the concept of 'rooms' on it, weren't they.」

I abruptly looked down at the floor we were standing on.

The floor itself was another type of 'Wall', laying in a different direction. And our footprints were left engraved on the Wall we ran on. The Fables we had compiled were floating up on the footprints we left behind.

「"By the way, Dok-Ja-ssi, what are you so focused on reading just now?"」

「It was the moment when my life's genre changed.」

「"The number of people remaining in the subway cabin is twelve. And there are only three insects inside the net."」

「One world was dying, while a new world was being born. And I was the sole reader

who knew the conclusion of this world.」

It was from the first scenario. Back when we were trying to escape from the subway.

「Please select your backer. Your chosen backer will become your trusty sponsor from now on.」

「[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is disappointed in you.]」

「[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is amused by your choice.]」

Those were from the Sponsor Selection. Starlights were illuminating our feet.

We began running again. The Fables created the path we should be running on.

「"Is it true that you're monopolising the food?"」

「"Stand up, everyone. The scenario has just begun, after all."」

「"An arrogant tenant showed up, I see."」

「"Hyeon-Seong-ssi, do it now. Destroy everything, please."」

Past the battles of Geumho and Chungmuro Stations, and…

「"I'm the… ninth quitter.」

「"…… My apologies, but, may I inquire what your name is?"」

「"I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok."」

The memories from the battles of the 'Capture the Flag' and the life-and-death struggle of the prophets were remembered next.

「"What an amusing thing this is. All this history belongs to the past, yet why have you all gathered in this place once more?"」

「"That bastard is nicknamed the tyrant king. Doesn't matter whether you're a man or woman, you'll be taken as a concubine if you're pretty enough, and if you're not,

either you'll be killed off or become his slave." 」

「 "In that case, Dok-Ja-ssi, you'll end up as a slave if you get caught." 」

「 The top dog among the Seoul's Seven Kings was, of course, the Conquering King Yu Jung-Hyeok. 」

We greeted the Gwanghwamun's 'Battle of the Kings', and…

「 "That's why I will not sit down on the 'Absolute Throne'." 」

…And, I destroyed the [Absolute Throne].

「 "However, I won't permit anyone else to sit down on this throne, either." 」

Every moment had been a battle against adversity. Not one scenario was easy, and we always had to risk our lives and fight the odds.

All these tragedies had become a story in the end. And we were running with that story.

Fables untangling endlessly like a ball of threads soon formed a single image. That image soon morphed into a white tiger. A white tiger sporting noble whiskers and stripes was now running beside me.

[Fable, 'King of a Kingless World', is seeing you off on your journey.]

The 'King of a Kingless World' – my nativity Fable was seeing me off.

The white tiger created the path we must tread on and roared out loudly, before coming to a sudden stop – as if the road from here on wasn't its to create, its yearning eyes chasing after my path.

[Fable, 'One Who Opposes the Miracles', is seeing you off on your journey.]

Before long, my second Fable taking on the figure of a blue hawk was flying above my head. It was the Fable I earned by killing the Returnee Myung Il-Sang who descended as the 'Calamity of Questions'.

[Fable, 'One Who Scorned the Storyteller', is seeing you off on your journey.]

Our every Fable was enabling us to run on the [Final Wall].

The expressions of my companions also changed as their own Fables appeared. Yi Hyeon-Seong hesitantly looked behind over and over again, while Shin Yu-Seung couldn't hold it anymore and broke down in tears.

「This was the road they had lived on, and the story they need to finish.」

[Fable, 'One Who Hunted the King of Disasters', is seeing you off on your journey.]

The Fable I earned by hunting the shadow of 'Yamato no Orochi' back in the [Peaceland]; a gigantic shadow of a snake was supporting the road we were running on.

Every single one of them was a precious story to us. We lived all those moments to their fullest and that's why all of us were here now.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Our Fables lost their strengths and collapsed as the storm of aftermaths grew harsher and harsher.

[Fable, 'One Who Murdered the Outer God', is seeing you off on your journey.]

A Fable resembling a massive squid protected us from the aftermath's storm.

[Fable, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun telling its last story.]

With every ounce of energy I could muster, I wielded the

[Unbreakable Faith]. We shook off the incoming 'Outer Gods' and dashed towards the [Final Wall].

The Fables of the Constellations were still telling their stories in the distance even now.

「The 'Flame of Conflagration' fell out from Uriel's hand. In that last moment, she looked up at a certain star shining in the night sky. And then…… 」

It was still not too late. Uriel, the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, and even the Great Sage, they were all still alive.

This story could be changed.

[The 'Final Wall' is not permitting your approach!]

We only had to go a little bit further.

['Access prevention process' has been initialised.]

And then, our steps came to a halt.

Right before our eyes stood thin, transparent walls layered one after another. Each wall was made up with incredible density.

We struck it several times, but its sturdiness couldn't be broken through the powers of individual Fables.

We could now see the 'Outer Gods' ignoring our masters and rushing towards us. The Dokkaebi King seemed to be relieved now as he shouted something at us, too.

I ignored them all and looked up at the night sky.

「All the stars of the universe had dimmed, but that didn't mean every single of them did.」

A ripple-like thing spread out from a certain spot in the night sky. The first one to realise what was going on was Han Su-Yeong. She rubbed her eyes hard and muttered out.

"He's way too late!"

The front section of a train could be seen dashing towards us. Surya's sun train was rushing in our direction as the ark's debris could be seen bouncing off its hull.

[Constellation, 'Supreme God of Light', is incarnating into the Final Scenario's location!]

[Apologies for my tardiness, Demon King of Salvation.]

He had finally attained the Status of a Myth-grade, and arrived in this stage by crossing the night sky.

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"Not at all. You are just in time."

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

Finally, the condition for the 'Beginning/Gi(起)' had been satisfied.

[The 'Stage Transformation' is activating!]

Fin.

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The night sky momentarily turned pure white from Surya's sunlight.

Just like how we fought together back in the 'Demon King Selection' battles as well as in the 'Gigantomachia', Surya's train was rushing towards us.

"Will pay the train fare later!"

With Han Su-Yeong shouting out pompously as our lead, we got on Surya's train.

An incredible explosion of sparks occurred at the train's wheels. The vehicle did a huge doughnut once in the air while emitting loud noises, before shooting straight towards the transparent wall as sonic booms exploded out from its rear. Yi Hyeon-Seong shouted out.

"It's breaking!"

Along with the loud 'Craaaaaaack!', the transparent walls began crumbling down.

We continued to break past the layers of walls and dashed forward. The [Final Wall]

recording the Fables of the Constellations was gradually getting closer.

The Dokkaebi King's loud roar was messily intermingling with the Fables from the 999th turn.

[Constellation, 'Supreme God of Light', is unleashing all of his Status!]

Surya's entire body as he sat in the engine room glowed brightly like a white-hot incandescent sun. Fables dripped out from the wounds visible all over his body.

Maybe, he too had already paid a hefty price to reach this place.

[Constellation Supreme God of Light's ■■ is 'Final Engineer'.]

Even then, his Fable didn't stop. Without showing anything outwardly, he used his own body as fuel to operate the [Sun Train]. As if that was his duty as the one who lived until now as the 'Supreme God of Light'.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is seeing you off on your journey!]

[The power output still isn't enough!]

Despite his fierce will burning throughout his entire body, the train's speed was gradually slowing down. It was all because the closer we got to the centre of the [Final Wall], the thicker the density of the protective walls became.

And just before the wall seemingly made out of net of texts collided against the front of the train, Jeong Hui-Won made her move.

"Leave it to me!"

"H-Hui-Won-ssi?! Eck!"

The moment she grabbed Yi Hyeon-Seong's neck tightly, his body shrunk down rapidly and eventually transformed into a steel sword. And this weapon's blade was soon burning hotly in the flames of the [Hellfire].

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is seeing you off on your journey!]

'Development/Seung(承)'.

The Fable that illuminated the battlefield of was now glowing brightly to scorch the [Final Wall].

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Truly a stupendous amount of flames gushed out from the front of the train, enveloping the frontal surface of the vehicle in intense heat.

Jeong Hui-Won releasing [Hellfire] from her entire body shouted out in a voice seemingly sizzling in lava.

"Fable, shmeeble! It's all going to end right here!"

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Every time her sword glowed brightly, the net of texts was torn apart.

She wielded her sword over and over again. Even as the sparks from the aftermath's storm ravaged her, she didn't forget to improve further upon her way of the sword.

This was the path Jeong Hui-Won's life had created. We were running on this path.

However, it was still not enough. We needed a much stronger power than this.

The sentences on the [Final Wall] were unfolding in the distance.

「In that final moment, Uriel reached out towards the sky.」

「My Fable might come to an end today, but.」

「There will be a star that shall never forget this story.」

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is seeing you off on your journey!]

The Fable of both Uriel and the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon crossed the Wall to be transmitted.

The Fables of Good and Evil collided energetically and protected us, and wings made out of texts sprouted from the sides of the train. Just like a roaring Apocalypse Dragon, the vehicle devoured the walls before our eyes and continued to advance forward.

[Stop!!]

The 'Dokkaebi King' began chasing after us even before we realised it. Fables flooded out from his arms and legs, and despite the 999th turn's individuals pursuing him, he still extended his arm towards us.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The Probability's sparks exploded out from the floor, shaking the train's central axis.

The vehicle shook hard, and just as it was about to lose its balance, more sentences floated up above the [Final Wall].

「The Great Sage watched the thunder spear fly towards his neck and spoke up.」

「Don't stop, maknae-ya.」

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal who never yielded right up until his final moments, was there. At the same time, a man wearing a black coat riding at the rear of the train stood up.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok!"

The 'Secretive Plotter' possessing Yu Jung-Hyeok raised his hand to the air. When he did, countless 'Outer Gods' rose up from amidst the storm of aftermaths occurring on the floor. They weren't the regular 'Nameless Ones', either.

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones' is seeing you off on your journey!]

[[Gogogogogo]]

[[WillhelpWillhelpWillhelpWillhelp]]

[[DidntforgetDidntforgetDidntforgetDidntforget]]

The 'Nameless Ones' that helped us or fought against us during the 'Journey to the West' propped up the rocking train. As if this vehicle was a ship riding on the rough waters of the Tongtian River, they were carrying us towards the [Final Wall].

[You have approached the core of the 'Final Wall'.]

Eventually, all the walls protecting the [Final Wall] crumbled down. The train was damaged everywhere, and Surya must've had blacked out as he was no longer releasing his Fable.

Not too far away, we could see the real [Final Wall]. A wall far thicker and expansive than any other I had ever seen.

[[This is the wall that I couldn't cross.]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke up.

「'Is it also not doable this time too?' That was the final moment for the 58th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok.」

「'I made a mistake. But, during the next turn…… ' The 96th turn Yu Jung-Hyeok closed his eyes in that manner.」

Countless ends for Yu Jung-Hyeok streamed by above the wall. It wasn't just him, though.

「'The last hero of Hwangsanbeol' Gyebaek continued to shake his

eternal rival who'd never wake up again.」

「Goryeo's number one swordsman and the Maritime War God, having lost an arm each, stood back to back and unleashed their final Statuses.」

The Wall that recorded the endings of all the Constellations. The last moments of all the Constellations that included Uriel and the Great Sage were being recorded on the Wall in real-time.

The companions and I disembarked from the unmoving train and dashed towards the wall.

「If only those sentences were erased; and if all those tragedies could be stopped.」

[You can't interfere with the 'Final Wall's' sentences.]

[Applicable paragraphs are prohibited from being overwritten.]

[Please input the cancellation code.]

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke up. [[No regular methods will work. I've already used physical force before, but couldn't destroy this wall.]]

Jeong Hui-Won shouted out. "We came this far, so there must be……!"

[[From here on, it's your job.]]

He was now looking at me. Somewhere within that gaze was the 3rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok's, who had completed the scenarios alongside me.

「What exactly is the 'Conclusion' you wish to see?」

This was what I needed to do in order to answer that question.

Yi Ji-Hye opened her mouth. "He couldn't do it even after 1863 lifetimes, so…… Ahjussi,

can you really do it?"

It was as she said.

I was not a 'protagonist' like Yu Jung-Hyeok, nor was I a 'writer' like Han Su-Yeong.

However, because I was neither the protagonist nor the writer, maybe there was something only I could do.

Maybe, I could remember that one thing that the protagonist couldn't see, and the writer had forgotten all about.

「The job that only him could do, him that read the 'Ways of Survival' for a very, very long time.」

I quietly stared into the 'Final Wall'. I focused all my attention and read the wall's surface again and again. Not too long after that, the wall radiated brilliantly. Just like a certain screen in the past that I had been reading over and over again.

「'Three Ways to Survive the Destroyed World'.」

Everything from that epic tale was being established within me. I hadn't yet read the final revised version of the 'Ways of Survival'. Which meant I didn't know how this story was supposed to end. However…

「[Oh, dear unfortunate puppet. You have come far too early. I'm sorry, but beyond here 'doesn't exist' yet.]」

The 1863rd turn's Dokkaebi King from the 'Secretive Plotter's' memories said that.

「But, what if all these were handed over to me without having been written yet?」

My companions and I rushed towards the wall.

「What if, someone wanted me to complete this story?」

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating beyond the limit!]

My overheating head felt like it'd explode, but I kept my eyes wide open and continued to glare at the wall.

The Fables written on the [Final Wall]. Those Fables were connecting with each other inside my head. I saw how each Fable was connected to another. I saw the cleverly-installed narrative devices within the Fables and then, the contexts surrounding them.

「Those that did appear in the novel, but had never been used until its end.」

When that happened, the previously perfect-looking story began showing gaps within it. Gaps that hadn't been filled. Things that would be collected as time passed by.

Things that were waiting for this story's 'epilogue'.

「Kim Dok-Ja knew exactly what that was.」

[You have awakened a new attribute!]

[Attribute, 'Foreshadow Collector', is activating!]

The story's gaps that only I could have discovered, someone who watched this tale as a 'reader' from the beginning till its end. I stared at the 'five gaps' visible on the expansive wall's surface.

"Ha-Yeong-ah."

"Leave it to me."

The first one to step up was Jang Ha-Yeong. She accurately placed her palm on the wall's gap that I pointed out.

[The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' has discovered its intended position.]

[The 'Final Wall's' first theme has been completed!]

Along with the explosion of blinding light, the wall's fragment slotted back in its spot; and then, a single sentence leaked out from there.

「This tale was a story about an 'impossible communication'.」

"Hui-Won-ssi, Gil-Yeong-ah!"

Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Gil-Yeong nodded their heads and placed their palms on their

own gaps. Then, the two portions of the 'Wall that Divides the Good and Evil' became one.

[The 'Wall that Divides the Good and Evil' has discovered its intended position.]

[The 'Final Wall's' second theme has been completed!]

「This tale was a story about indistinguishable 'Good and Evil', and…」

And now, it was Yu Sang-Ah's turn.

"Yu Sang-Ah-ssi."

She slowly walked forward, found her gap, and reached out.

[The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' has discovered its intended position.]

[The 'Final Wall's' third theme has been completed!]

「And, this tale was a story about a tragedy locked in a cycle.」

With that, four gaps had been filled, leaving the last one. I looked up at that empty spot.

The last fragment of the [Final Wall]. That was the fragment that never appeared in the original novel.

「Kim Dok Ja.」

[The 4th Wall] was addressing me.

"The 4th Wall."

Both it and I knew exactly what we needed to do here.

A blinding fragment made up of texts floated up above my palm. Those texts were now talking to me.

「I li ke y our st ory.」

I couldn't say anything. While unable to say anything, I ran towards that last empty gap and slotted the fragment inside.

「This tale was a story of a reader who wanted to change its conclusion.」

Right next moment, an incredible shower of sparks exploded from the wall.

[The code has been lifted.]

The wall's authority was opening up towards me. The secrets of the wall that even Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't cross was now streaming into me.

The sentence of the Constellations floated up right before my eyes. It was the last sentence of the Great Sage and Uriel that I wanted to stop so badly.

「The blades flying in at the necks of the Great Sage and Uriel…… 」

I powerfully grabbed that sentence.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

It felt like my hand was set on fire. Fables clung onto me and stabbed into my hand like sharp blades. However, I held on. I couldn't let this sentence end like that.

[The 'Final Wall' is puzzled by your actions.]

[The 'Final Wall' is asking you, wasn't this the story you wanted?]

I didn't want it. Who would want a conclusion like this?

[Stop! I said, stop that right now!!] The 'Dokkaebi King' persistently chased after us, Fables dripping from all over his body. Thick murderous aura was filling up his eyes.

[You must not touch the Wall! You'll regret it! There is nothing beyond this Wall! Not even what you wished for, not even what you wanted to see!]

He was wrong. The 'Most Ancient Dream' was beyond this Wall.

"Wenny King!"

The Wenny King hiding within my shadow imprisoned the Dokkaebi King's body.

[Finally, we meet again, my old friend.]

[…The Wenny King!]

[Go on ahead, Kim Dok-Ja. Fulfil our agreement.]

I didn't let go of the sentence still in my hand.

「The blades flying in at the necks of the Great Sage and Uriel w……」

While grabbing hold of that 'w', I prevented the next vowel from generating. Along with 'Pu-shu-shuk!' noise, my fingers were sliced off.

Fables leaking out nonstop screamed out.

[You are not the 'Dokkaebi King'.]

[You cannot stop the progress of the applicable Fable.]

It was then, something soft enveloped the back of my hand accompanied by the "Ba-aht!" noise. With every ounce of her energy she could summon, Biyu rubbed her whole body against that sentence as if she had become an eraser.

「The storyteller had sided with Dok-Ja/the reader.」

Along with Biyu, I smacked down on the sentence with everything I got, over and over again. I swung my fist at the unstoppable sentence, then even stabbed it with my sword. Please, please, please!

「And eventually…… 」

Very faintly, cracks were developing on the letters.

The already-written sentences were scattering away.

The Conclusion was changing.

「Te bades flyin in aaat te nec of Great an Ur el…… 」

The broken words initiated a storm of powerful sparks, before transforming into something I couldn't read at all.

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「■■blade■■■■Ur■■■■Sage■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■」

[[Ooooooooh-!!]]

Countless 'Outer Gods' howled out. Their cries even sounded reverential as if they were exalting a great god.

I held my hand that bled Fables nonstop, and witnessed the Wall's

surface changing.

Shin Yu-Seung had come closer without me realising it to tightly hold my hand.

"Ahjussi……”

[You have acquired a new 'Great Fable'!]

[Great Fable, 'One Who Breaks the Final Wall', has been acquired.]

[Great Fable, 'One Who Breaks the Final Wall', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[is seeing you off on your journey.]

As the messages exploded inside my head, the Wall before our eyes collapsed.

The Fables written on the Wall and our own were now getting all jumbled up.

Countless ■s were spinning around in sync. And that made them resemble circles.

And just beyond those pitch-black circles, I thought I could see something.

[Hahahaha!! This is it! As per our agreement, I shall be the first one to confirm what's beyond the 'Final Wall'!!]

The Wenny King shoved the 'Dokkaebi King' aside and jumped right into the black circle. And as the latter began crying in despair, the blade of [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] pierced his throat cleanly.

My companions ran up to me.

「Everything in this world was crumbling down.」

The [Final Wall], the , everything was collapsing.

「The broken wall was getting jumbled up with the companions' Fables.」

「It became gradually impossible to tell apart what was a Fable and what was reality.

」

Something beyond the circle was looking at this side. I too stared right back at it.

「…… Just what is that?」

Little by little, it became harder to breathe. Something was sucking me in. Everything I experienced, felt, and judged were now streaming above the [Final Wall] in sloppy, broken sentences.

「Every… 」

"one……!!"

I couldn't figure out whether I was saying that or the Wall was.

I was now simply a description on that Wall.

Some sentences could only be seen faintly, while some others couldn't be seen at all.

Eventually, all the flowing sentences began disappearing one at the time. Slowly, so agonisingly slowly.

Just like that, every sentence above the Wall came to a st●.

Fin.

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Within this faint light gently and warmly embracing his entire body, the Wenny King was curled up in a fetal position, dreaming of a certain dream.

That was a very ancient dream. A tale from well before his ■■ had been decided.

He was collapsed on the floor of a tainted forest.

- Epsilon! We only have to go a little bit further. The Demon King's castle is almost within reach!

In this tale, he was a warrior subjugating the Demon King. A warrior that had set off on the Demon King subjugation expedition to protect his world.

Unfortunately, he didn't get to fulfil his long-cherished desire. Just before the subjugation went underway, he had to close his eyes, his friend's face the last thing he saw.

-… Gilbert.

The scene changed, and now it displayed a warzone.

He was now a man from Murim, kitted out in a set of black-coloured garments of a nightly operative.

- Senior brother Kwok! The main base of the demonic cult bastards is right over there!

He saw the face of his comrade filling up his view. Longing quickly filled him up. She was the person he loved the most out of all the lives he had lived.

-… It's too late for me. Junior sister, please go on ahead.

A whistling noise of an arrow flying in from somewhere later, his

vision blackened once more.

His head was pounding away. As memories overflowed, the Wenny King's ego was shaking unsteadily.

Were these scenes from his own memories or stories from the 「Final Wall」?

Where did this story begin, and where would it end?

Independent of his will, the tale continued on.

He was now a young hatchling.

He was also a monstrous creature without a name.

He was an expert from Murim, and also a knight from medieval times.

And every time that happened, he was an Incarnation clearing the scenarios.

The last thing he heard in front of the [Final Wall] was the voice coming from a shadow without a name.

- My friend. Even during our next life, accompany me.

He gasped out loudly and opened his eyes, only to be greeted by the pitch-black darkness. The cold sweat soaking the nape of his neck sent deathly chills all over his body.

'I'm the Wenny King.'

That was his name. He did have a real name, but that had been forgotten a long time ago. No, he couldn't even be certain whether that was really his name or not.

‘…Am I really the Wenny King?'

Within the swirling pitch-black vacuum, the Wenny King fell into deep contemplation.

It was the kind of contemplation he had never entertained after surpassing the limits of mortality.

'Who am I?'

The Fable acting as the foundation of his existence was now shaking unsteadily. In

order to regain himself at any cost, he began ruminating over his own memories.

「In the beginning, there was a Wenny.」

「He was the first storyteller. A human that sang about Fables.」

「But one day, Dokkaebis appeared in the world, and… 」

「And those Dokkaebis took away the Wenny's song.」

That was all he needed to remember.

Remember that those damned Dokkaebis took away the Wenny's song; remember the fact that they expelled him from the 's scenarios by stealing away his nativity Fable.

[You look confused, my old friend.]

The Wenny King was startled by that true voice and hurriedly looked behind him. The face of the Dokkaebi King was floating within the pitch-black darkness.

[Dokkaebi King!]

The former growled and unleashed his Status. However, things didn't go according to plan. Within this space where nothing existed, the

Status he emitted only left behind faint sparks.

The Dokkaebi King spoke with a disinterested expression.

[You aren't allowed to fight in here. Our powers aren't valid in this place.]

[…You somehow managed to survive. I thought that you died at the blade of that puppet.]

[It's not much different from having died already. And, will die again, too.]

In the spot where the Dokkaebi King's gaze landed, they could see a circular exit of light swirling around. The soul forms of these two beings were slowly heading towards that exit.

The Wenny King shouted out. [No, hold on! My Fable has just begun! I will be crossing

over the 'Final Wall'! I shall encounter the lazy god that imagined everything of this world, and become the sole creature that knows the secret of this world!!]

[Are you that curious about this world's secret?]

[You speak of something obvious. There isn't a single creature not curious about the origin of their own birth.]

[And that's precisely the reason why creatures become unhappy.]

The Dokkaebi King spoke in a self-deprecating manner.

[Why do you think creatures possess the wonderful ability called 'forgetfulness'?]

The Fable debris was scattering away within the darkness. Stories that

had lost their contexts became just lumps of texts and slowly broke away. They were now stories that no one could read anymore.

The Dokkaebi King gently caressed them, before crushing that Fable into powder.

[There are far too many unnecessary stories in this universe. A process is required in order to eliminate them and to optimise everything. That is what 'forgetfulness' is.]

[Rubbish! The universe is infinite. Just like how the end of the 'Final Wall' doesn't exist.]

[Even if there are plenty of blank margins left on the Wall, just how much of that do you think is permitted to the measly extras?]

The Dokkaebi King looked down at his own body slowly crumbling away.

[Unfortunately, the protagonist the 'Final Wall' has chosen is neither you or me.]

[I don't know what rubbish you're trying to spew here, but……!]

[Even then, you shall soon meet the one you so dearly wished to meet.]

It was then the Wenny King's shoulders flinched.

The exit of light could be seen. It was such a rapturous, resplendent light. The exit was spinning vigorously and it somewhat resembled a full stop of a certain world.

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The Wenny King suddenly grew scared.

[You, have you seen what's beyond that?]

The Dokkaebi King didn't reply immediately. He had this expression of boredom as if all sentences held no meaning after the full stop itself. Still, he did add a comment in the end.

[What meaning is there, anyway?]

[What?]

[I'm saying, what meaning is there to knowing that this world was just a portion of a vast dream?]

His words contained endless futility of it all.

The Wenny King couldn't understand what was being said.

The light was getting brighter, yet the expression on the Dokkaebi King was getting blurrier. Soon, the exit of light was literally right before his nose. The worried Wenny King asked.

[…Why did you continue on with until now?]

Maybe that question was unexpected? The Dokkaebi King's expression changed bizarrely. He quietly stared at the Wenny King, before making his reply.

[I wonder. I can't remember it anymore.]

In that moment, several Fables overlapped on the Dokkaebi King's face.

At once, he looked like a warrior subjugating the Demon King, an expert from the dangerous world of Murim battling the demonic sect, and a hatchling spreading its wings towards the wide-open sky. He was……

[…You-!]

[Kim Dok-Ja has opened a door that should've never been opened. And so, this world will forever be mired in misfortune.]

At the end of those words, the world was blanketed by pure light. They had finally reached the exit. The Wenny King staggered unsteadily and set foot inside that light.

He brushed past the rays of light and tread forward little by little.

The answer was here.

The 'Most Ancient Dream' that created this world was here.

However, the Wenny King couldn't see anything.

The noisy blaring of hooters could be heard coming from somewhere. A thick, choking smell that wetted his nose; it became harder and harder to breath. His body began burning up under the rays of light.

As if, this blank margin wasn't permitted to him.

[I told you. This story is neither yours or mine.]

Along with the Dokkaebi King's words, the Wenny King's body began melting down.

[We are simply tools of this world. That's all.]

Ah, aaaah……

Even though his legs melted away, followed by his torso, the Wenny King never shifted his gaze away from the spectacle before his eyes.

That was where the Most Ancient Dream was. The secret of everything in this world was there. That something he had been searching for forever was there.

The Wenny King saw it. And then, finally understood what the Dokkaebi King was saying earlier.

That, that is indeed…

The Wenny King wished to shout out so desperately. To shout out, please look this way.

Please, I'm right here. Please, look at me just once.

And then, 'that' slowly shifted its head.

However, by the time its gaze reached where the Wenny King was, the latter was no longer existing in that place.

So, 'that' shifted its head away.

And, while keeping its head down, it began muttering about something once more.

*

Cough.

I felt something scratchy inside my mouth after coughing a bit. I spat out the stuffed-up breath, and insect-like things leaked out. I took a look and realised that they were letters.

Sensations returned and my vision brightened. I saw the letters emitting bright white light before my eyes. They were of familiar contents.

Just where is this……?

"Dok-Ja-ssi? You might get sucked into the book if you do that."

Suddenly, the back of my neck grew cold. That was a familiar voice, and with words I had heard somewhere before. Horrifying imagination made a right old mess of my mind. I once thought that if I destroyed the [Final Wall], something like this might happen. However, to think that such a thing would really……

Then, accompanied by flapping noises, torn bits of paper danced around before my eyes. I took another closer look and discovered someone lightly shaking a book around.

“……Sang-Ah-ssi."

Yu Sang-Ah was standing before my eyes.

The surrounding view gradually grew clearer. It was the view of discarded books forming small mounds, as well as bookshelves lining up with nary a space in between.

All illuminated by the faint light from a lantern. This wasn't the subway.

This was the location I was quite familiar with.

Yu Sang-Ah grinned brightly.

"This place feels so cosy to me now."

We were inside [The 4th Wall].

“……What happened?"

"Even if you ask me…… I also woke up just now, you see. Should we go and look for my librarian seniors?"

As Yu Sang-Ah shrugged her shoulders and began scanning the surroundings, I quickly organised what happened to us so far in my head.

「We had gathered all the fragments of the [Final Wall] and eventually brought it down.」

The memory of the 'square circle' spinning around was still vivid in my mind.

…And then? What happened afterwards?

What about the other companions?

「Do n't wo rry Kim Dok Ja.」

A voice I thought I could never hear again entered my ears. I shouted out in happiness.

"The 4th Wall!"

「Si len ce in the lib rary.」

This was definitely [The 4th Wall] that I remembered, that sly playfulness included.

Separate from how happy I was, though, my puzzlement only grew even bigger, instead.

Why was I inside [The 4th Wall] right now?

"Dok-Ja-ssi?"

More voices could be heard coming from the darkness. They were from the

Ja Company＞'s companions.

"Just where are we?"

"……I found a strange book here. It's called 「「Kim Dok-Ja and the mysteries of sex.

」」"

"You should definitely not be looking at such things, Ji-Hye-ya."

"How about this one, then? 「「If they have their bibles, then Kim Dok-Ja has the Ways of Survival.」」"

"You really want to read something like that?"

I thought I could hear Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Ji-Hye speaking to each other. And then, a pair of small heads popped out from a nearby mound of books as if they were moles.

"Ahjussi!"

"Hyung!"

It was Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong. I could also see Han Su-Yeong walking towards us in the darkened view.

"What a weird place this is. Is this that 'library' Yu Sang-Ah talked about before?"

She pulled out a book from the shelf to toss it behind her. Meanwhile, Yi Hyeon-Seong standing behind her caught that and stuffed it inside his inner pocket.

"S-Su-Yeong-ssi! You shouldn't handle books so carelessly…… You don't even know what these things are!"

"Wowee, what's this! Sounds fun."

Behind them, I spotted the unconscious Gong Pil-Du, Jang Ha-Yeong and Anna Croft lying on the floor. And finally, Yi Seol-Hwa checking for their pulses. At the very least, all of my companions that participated in the 'Final Scenario' were gathered here.

「N ot ev ery one.」

I got this rather bad premonition after hearing [The 4th Wall]'s voice.

I still couldn't see 'that guy' yet.

…Could it be??

「(Hahahaha! Yu Jung-Hyeok! I can smell him somewhere nearby! Did he finally show up here in order to become one with me?!)」

A voice loudly reverberated out from within the deep darkness. It was obviously coming from Nirvana. And right next second, a dull impact noise rang out. The now-silent Nirvana's limp body rolled around on the floor, and then, a certain black combat boot trampled that poor

sob's head.

“……What an unpleasant space this is."

"Yu Jung-Hyeok."

Sparks were still faintly dancing around him as if he hadn't yet separated from the

'Secretive Plotter'. Since he's here too, who was it that couldn't come?

“……Constellations aren't here."

"What happened to everyone back on Earth?"

[The 4th Wall] evacuating us here could only mean that some sort of a problem had occurred in the outside world.

My heart was now growing icy cold. I recalled the [The 4th Wall], as well as the sentences above it, shattering into million pieces. What went wrong? Did the world perish because I tried to change the story?

It was then, [The 4th Wall] said something completely unexpected.

「Ti me not mov ing be cau se not re ading not ima gin ing」

Even before I could ask about the meaning of that, some creatures appeared first.

「(Have you finally broken the wall, the apostle of eternity and epilogue?)」

.

.

.

.

「(…Such a day has indeed arrived before us.)」

They were the librarians 'Devourer of Dreams' and 'Simulation'. I stared at them first before addressing [The 4th Wall].

"Let me out of here. There's something I need to confirm."

That prompted the librarians to reply, instead.

「(Even if it's you, you still won't survive by going outside. no longer exists. Everything in that place has now come to a dead stop.)」

Everything had stopped.

For sure, the Fables that could normally be heard over the wall couldn't be heard anymore. Instead, the noise akin to a giant spring winding up could be heard coming from somewhere. It was at once like the ticking of a watch's second hand, or even the sound of very consistent but slow, rhythmic typing of a keyboard.

"In that case, I'll go and meet the guy that'll wind the clock back."

「(…… Do you really wish to go and meet the 'Most Ancient Dream'?)」

That being was at the final stop of all these stories. might have been destroyed, but there was a question that needed to be answered still.

「Why did a world like this have to exist?」

I looked back to discover my companions making similar expressions to each other.

Every one of us had their own questions they wanted answers for, and had certain ends they wanted to see. And in order to get there, there was something we definitely had to do first.

Yu Sang-Ah spoke up first.

"Let's go together, Dok-Ja-ssi."

"Me too! I wanna go!"

"I'm really curious about the epilogue you wanted to see, ahjussi."

"There, there. Let's not agonise about this, shall we? Who knows, maybe a really nice Dokkaebi is waiting for us there or something. If not, we can smack him around for a bit and make him more agreeable, too."

As if to agree with that, Biyu added her own opinion.

[Ba-aht!]

It was around then that Yu Jung-Hyeok broke the silence he had been observing.

"Before that, do you even have a way to meet him? The wall might be destroyed, but the time flow of the outside world has stopped. If time isn't moving, Fables cannot move forward. It will be the same for us."

「(There are some places where time hasn't stopped.)」

Nirvana smiled and pointed to the floor.

Right. The time inside this 'library' hadn't stopped at all.

"Could that bastard be inside this library?"

「(…… That's not it. This library is also just another 'wall', you see. However, a new passageway has opened up after you have completed the story. Meaning, you can now cross over to the other side.)」

While saying that, Nirvana guided us somewhere. Somehow, I thought I knew where he was taking us. I recalled the cliff that spanned below the library.

「This is the end of the library. The end of all stories.」

The vast, bottomless pit. A valley laid out like the abyss itself.

It was the location I discovered back when I entered [The 4th Wall] for the first time.

“……It's exactly that place."

I almost fell to the bottom there when I first stumbled in here. Back then, Nirvana told me that if I fell in there, I'd die for sure. He said that was 'beyond the wall'.

Nirvana asked me. 「(Kim Dok-Ja. Do you really wish to go over there?)」

I nodded my head.

Then, Nirvana pulled at a rope hanging from the darkness. I thought something like a pulley was activating, then a small elevator-like thing slowly rose up from below.

「(Get on.)」

We all climbed aboard this elevator.

Then we were slowly lowered into the pit.

[Exclusive attribute, 'One Who Looked into the Abyss', is initialising.]

Finally, the answers I've been searching for was right before my eyes. Fables still remaining within me were getting agitated as well.

Just how long did we climb down like this? We were eventually greeted by the sounds of the pulley stopping.

I stepped foot on the darkness, only to be greeted by mouldy smell. The floor was slick and damp, too; almost like the remnants of a structure that hadn't been used for a very long time.

The light from the lantern illuminated the front to reveal a faint line made up of yellowish blocks.

"Isn't this place……”

Jeong Hui-Won muttered to herself. And right then, we heard the noise of something rushing towards us from the darkness past the yellow blocks. As a matter of fact, the darkness itself was shaking ominously now. It was a loud, explosive noise, as if a monster was madly dashing towards us.

A short while later, a pair of faint monstrous eyes appeared from the

other side of the passageway.

“……Oh, my god."

Jeong Hui-Won muttered out, but didn't reach for her sword even after witnessing what kind of a monster it was. The rest of the companions reacted the same, as well.

All because everyone knew exactly what that monster was.

「The beginning of all these stories.」

It was the subway.

Fin.

The subway train slowed down before coming to a stop before us, and then, opened its doors.

There was no mistaking it. This was the subway we all recognised.

Jeong Hui-Won's lips bobbed up and down before finally breaking the silence first.

"Why would a subway show up here……?"

Of course, no one here could answer that question.

The first one to make his move was Yi Gil-Yeong. Yu Sang-Ah shouted out. "Gil-Yeong-ah! You mustn't get on that t…!"

The boy fearlessly stepped foot inside and climbed aboard the subway, and turned around to look at us. As if nothing was going on, he shrugged his shoulders.

Yi Ji-Hye watched that spectacle, then grabbed Shin Yu-Seung's hand and stepped forward as well. "I don't know anymore. Let's just get in first and see what's what!"

That was the beginning; other companions still hesitating entered the subway one by one. I too followed after them.

The moment I set foot on the floor of the subway that trembled ever so slightly, I was overcome with deja vu.

「Once upon a time, this was all of Kim Dok-Ja's world.」

No, that was wrong. This was not my world.

「This was everyone's and anyone's world.」

For Yu Sang-Ah, Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Hyeon-Seong, and Yi Ji-Hye, too… Everyone carried their own, different expressions. Just like how I rode on this subway and lived my daily

life, it should roughly be the same story with them as well.

Someone used to be an office worker, someone was a student, and someone used to be a soldier, but still…

"A subway, is it… Back then, I was really fed up of riding it, but now, I'm really happy to see it again."

Jeong Hui-Won's words made us carefully scan the interior of the subway itself.

All the seats were brand new, while the safety bars were wiped clean, too. Not even a hint of filth could be seen on the floor.

Of course, what proved to be even more surprising than that was…

"……By the way, why isn't anyone else riding in this thing?"

Not a single presence could be felt within the subway. This was a sterile, inorganic space where nothing was alive besides us. This vehicle was permeated with such a sense of abnormality.

I looked at the librarians remaining outside the subway and asked them.

"Aren't you joining us? You wanted to witness the end of the world too, didn't you?"

「(We can't go with you.)」

"How come?"

Nirvana and the other librarians didn't answer. They exchanged somewhat saddened gazes with each other, before finally making their reply.

「(You witnessing the end will be enough for……)」

[The doors are closing.]

The rest of their words couldn't be heard; the doors shut close, and accompanied by the noises of a giant cartwheel turning, the subway began chugging forward. Its speed was neither quick nor slow. And outside the windows, we saw the view of the pitch-black darkness lazily shifting past us.

I gazed into that darkness for a long time. Just where was this train taking us?

"It's the line number three."

Han Su-Yeong muttered that out. I also looked up at the subway map.

The line number three. It was the line that I used to commute every day. Strangely, though, the ends of the map were broken off. Even the names of the stations were erased, as well.

…

Meanwhile, the subway continued to chug along. Several minutes passed by since then, but it showed no signs of stopping. It seemed that this vehicle was planning to run straight to its final stop without a break.

With a 'plop!' noise, Han Su-Yeong settled down on the cushion next to mine. She glared at the subway map, her long eyelashes blinking constantly.

I asked her. "What's up with that expression?"

"I don't ride on stuff like subways."

"Why not?"

Almost immediately, I realised what a dumb question that was. For sure, someone like her wouldn't have a need to ride on subways, anyway. What she said next was completely out of my expectations, though.

"I mean, there's nothing to see here. Both inside and out."

We both stared at the broken subway map. Without a doubt, a subway train would travel the exact same line every single day. It would then

stop at the predetermined time. Similar things would continue to happen within these unchanging sceneries every day.

I also hated subways. I used to stare at the smartphone during commuting for a similar reason to hers, too.

"Subways don't operate for our amusement, though."

.

.

.

.

“……Oh, my? Now that's not something the Constellation 'Demon King of Salvation'

would say."

I smiled bitterly.

We stared in the same direction next – at our companions. At the people who endured the apocalypse with me, cleared 99 scenarios together, and reached this place.

“……Mm. We won't suddenly go back to the first scenario or something like that, right?"

"No, that can't be! Definitely not!"

"Should I ready some grasshoppers just in case?"

The companions saw Yi Gil-Yeong clenching his fist with a resolute expression, and broke out in smirks.

What did it mean to find humour from the most horrifying memory they held? With what kind of thoughts were they smiling at that story?

I spoke to Han Su-Yeong. "They need to go back to their old lives."

"You think they'll be happier like that?"

"All stories are supposed to end that way."

"And since when did you start enjoying that sort of development?" Han Su-Yeong shot back with a retort. "Hey, you. You aren't thinking up of anything weird again, right?

Are you hiding something from me again?"

"I'd like to, but I've nothing to hide anymore."

I was being honest. Even the original novel never reached this far. It was the same story for the 'Secretive Plotter' or the other individuals from the 999th turn. We were the first to ride on this subway.

I spoke up while looking at the end of the faintly-erased subway map.

"Han Su-Yeong, I think……"

"Could it be that a final boss is waiting for us there? Isn't that how it normally is?"

Jeong Hui-Won said that. She wasn't talking to me, however. It seemed that the companions were busy discussing something over there. Shin Yu-Seung added her opinion.

"Maybe there's a dragon this big."

"But, I don't think a Modifier like the 'Most Ancient Dream' would get assigned to a dragon. To get a Modifier like that, it must be……"

"Couldn't it be the 'author'?"

"The author?"

"You know, that……"

When Yi Gil-Yeong saying that shifted his gaze in my direction, the other companions seemed to abruptly recall 'it' too, and all turned their heads towards me.

「「Three Ways to Survive a Destroyed World」」.

They also knew about that novel now. They knew that that novel described the stories of this world, and that only I had read it to its conclusion.

"……What do you think, Dok-Ja-ssi?"

Every novel out there couldn't become 'stories' unless a writer wrote them down first.

The suspicion my companions held some weight if this world was based off on the

'Ways of Survival'.

For sure, there was a good chance that the 'Most Ancient Dream' was the writer. I too thought that way.

However, why do I…

"…I don't think the 'Most Ancient Dream' is the author of the 'Ways of Survival'."

"Why do you think that?"

.

.

.

.

"I'm not sure, but I have a hunch."

To me, the being at the end of this line didn't seem like it'd be 'tls123'. I recalled what the Dokkaebi King said back then.

「[Rather than an author, you could say that the 'Most Ancient Dream' is much closer to being a reader. It's not an existence that writes stories for someone else. It's lazy and can be quite greedy, you see.]」

I even began questioning whether an 'author' was necessary in our current hypothesis.

Did this world really begin because of tls123?

Maybe tls123 simply alerted me to the already-existing world, instead?

Just like how the 'Secretive Plotter' or the other individuals from the 999th turn existed even though they weren't recorded in the pages…

"Now that I think about, I'm curious. Dok-Ja-ssi, how did you stumble across that novel in the first place?"

"Ahh, I was also curious about that."

Yu Jung-Hyeok disinterestedly polishing the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] shifted his gaze towards me when that topic was brought up. Jang Ha-Yeong asked as her eyes sparkled.

"Was it like some kind of a fateful attraction?"

"I also know something about such a feeling! The first time I held a grenade back when I was a private, I……!"

"I just came across it while browsing the net, actually."

Companions seemed to be disappointed by my reply. But, nothing could be done about that, because it's true. Han Su-Yeong then retorted back.

"What did you search for exactly, to find such a crappy novel?"

"That is……”

I couldn't remember it all that well now.

Yi Ji-Hye shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, well. It's not that important now, right? The only thing that matters is that ahjussi did read that novel somehow."

"That's right. What would've happened if Dok-Ja-ssi didn't read that novel?"

I looked at Yu Sang-Ah grinning brightly and shut my mouth tightly.

I didn't deserve to hear those words.

「In the end, stars fell and the world came to a stop.」

We were marching towards a conclusion no one in the 'Ways of Survival' managed to reach, but there was no guarantee that what I wanted was waiting at the end of the line.

I too had no knowledge of the things about to happen from now on.

「What if it was someone else who read that novel to its end?」

There were better-suited people than me here. The righteous Jeong Hui-Won, the trusty Yi Hyeon-Seong, the straight-shooter Yu Sang-Ah, they should've been the one to read the novel. If that happened, maybe the world would've ended up in a far better shape than this.

"Thank you, ahjussi. For reading that novel."

Shin Yu-Seung matched my eye level and was now smiling.

"That's right. I heard that novel was really boring, too. If it really wasn't for Dok-Ja-ssi……”

"If it was me, I probably couldn't get past the first page. I really hate books, you know?"

"I tried to read a couple of books back inside the 's military library, but… As expected, me and reading were not really a……”

While looking at Yi Hyeon-Seong scratching his head, I somehow managed to force my mouth shut.

Because the 'Ways of Survival' existed, the people before me existed, too. And because I read that novel, I was able to save them from the dangers.

"I……"

I, someone of no redeeming quality, could be loved by the others.

"Because of the Fables you taught me, I managed to get this far, hyung."

The kids' small hands were tightly holding onto mine.

I slowly raised my head, and saw the darkness of the subway streaming by. And the Fables we lived through were passing us by within that darkness.

We silently observed those Fables. They were as beautiful as the Milky Way in the wintery night sky, yet just as futile as the fireworks going off. Stories that none among us could forget, but we'd do so eventually. Jeong Hui-Won opened her mouth.

"……Dok-Ja-ssi. I think it's fine to ask this now, so……"

I knew already what she wanted to ask me.

"What exactly is the 'conclusion' you want to see, Dok-Ja-ssi?"

No Constellations were looking at us now. Even that ruled over the world no longer existed. So, there was no reason to… not tell them.

"I've already… seen one of them."

I carefully peered into the faces of all my companions. No sentences floated up on their expressions. Even then, I could tell what the conclusion I wanted to see from their faces.

"And the other one is to repay my debt."

"Your debt?"

I shifted my head to discover Yu Jung-Hyeok glaring at me.

Ku-gugugu……

Along with the dull vibration, the train's speed began to decrease little by little.

We slowly got up from our seats. Once-noisy companions began speaking less and less.

Nervousness was filling up their expressions.

I slowly approached the exit. Jeong Hui-Won stood to my left, while Yu Jung-Hyeok was on my right.

The Fables passing by in the darkness were slowing down.

It wasn't just our story existing out there, however.

「There was the 0th turn, then the first turn.」

Also, the second, and the third turns, too.

「And that's how 1864 regression cycles have gathered, and in turn, opened up this world.」

Countless Yu Jung-Hyeoks lived through those turns. Although none of them lived the right way, not one could be called wrong, too.

The world was far too cruel a place to debate the ethics of life, and the volume of despair was far too great to tell the tale of hope. However, Yu Jung-Hyeok remained resolute because he didn't try to justify himself.

「His sole desire to see the end of this world.」

I too carried that same desire.

That was the dream of 1865 Yu Jung-Hyeoks existing from the 0th to the 1864th regression turns, and the end of the world that I wanted, too.

"……It's really been long. Wasn't it?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok shot back, as if to question what the hell I was even saying here. "It's only been four years, Kim Dok-Ja. Compared to the time I experienced, it's……”

"Right."

Four years. That was how long we had been fighting together.

"Four years that felt like a lifetime."

When I said that, Jeong Hui-Won to my left lightly poked me with her sword's hilt.

"We'll still stick together from now on too, so why do you sound so grimly determined?

Don't worry. No matter what kind of a monster is waiting for us, I'll finish it off."

I gently smiled. Meanwhile, the subway was slowing down even further.

My reflection could be seen in the black window of the exit door. There was a splatter of blood on my cheek reflected on the glass. I wiped it off my face. And then, my mood cooled down.

「The blood was really on my cheek, and not on the window.」

"Doors are opening!"

Along with Yi Hyeon-Seong's cry, everyone got ready to fight.

“……Ng?"

However, contrary to everyone's nervousness, what greeted us was a rather empty subway platform. Sure, there were a few people walking around in the surroundings, but none of them paid us much attention.

"What's this, there's no……”

Jeong Hui-Won muttered that out, and as we stepped onto the platform, I was overcome with an ominous foreboding. There it was, the unfamiliar sense of reality touching my feet. Faint sparks, along with every single one of my Fables, were pointing in a certain direction.

「Someone was sitting on the subway's bench.」

A thick school bag filled with textbooks, as if its owner had left school not too long ago.

A thin, small-statured child who might have passed off as an elementary schooler were it not for his school uniform, was sitting on that bench.

As if he was trying to memorise English words, he was busy scribbling something like a chart on his notebook.

As the pulsing migraine assaulted me, I somehow managed to lift my unmoving feet.

「Kim Dok-Ja made a promise. To end the culprit who made this world. No matter what that existence was.」

Maybe, he was struck by someone somewhere? There was a big bruising on the kid's pale arm. A bruising that I could more or less figure out where he got it from. All strength left my legs and I couldn't move anymore.

「Time isn't moving because not reading and not imagining.」

I did think that all of this could be a dream, a lie. I even believed that this was a dream the evil had created.

But now, I couldn't deny it anymore.

All of my senses were telling me the truth; they said that that child was the culprit behind all these scenarios.

「Y ou we re al rea dy ex pec ting this di dn't you Kim Dok Ja.」

The most ancient dream. The world's most omniscient yet powerless god.

['The 4th Wall's' influence is getting weaker.]

「Kim Dok…… 」

['The 4th Wall's' influence is getting extremely weak.]

I thought I heard something fall to the floor, and I saw Jeong Hui-Won's sword rolling around on the ground.

"Ah, ah……"

She was now looking at me. She was looking at the child, then back at me. Her eyes were filling up with despair.

As if she couldn't believe this. As if she'd prefer that this whole thing turned out to be a lie.

[The promise with the 'Secretive Plotter' is activating.]

I opened my mouth only to close it several times. Maybe, this might be my punishment.

It might very well be the time to pay the price for the salvation I received.

[You have promised to destroy .]

[will not be destroyed unless the 'Most Ancient Dream' is ended.]

I now stared at the child.

At the child with the exact same face as mine.

And the boy slowly raised his head to look back at me.

[Please end the 'Most Ancient Dream'.]

Fin.

My consciousness kept trying to blank out.

「What would it be like if the 'Ways of Survival' was real?」

Whether that was my own thoughts, or something that was recorded on the [Final Wall], or maybe even…

「If there was a world where I can fight alongside the characters from the 'Ways of Survival'…… 」

…The imaginations of the 'Most Ancient Dream', I couldn't be sure.

Countless memories rushed in like a sudden incoming wave. Imaginations that unfolded in a messy cacophony became the fuel for the stories in another world. The living reality had become the 'tragedy'.

「Wait, now that I think about it, what happens to the old world after

Yu Jung-Hyeok regresses?… I should ask the author-nim in the comment section.」

I always thought that I remembered the 'Ways of Survival' better than anyone else. I was proud that I had read the novel diligently, much more so than anyone else, too. So why couldn't I recall much about 'myself' that read the novel?

Maybe, I was…

[You have become the 'Character'.]

Sparks overflowed above my Incarnation Body. [The 4th Wall]'s functions were coming to a halt. My heart was madly pounding away, and unidentifiable screams reverberated within my devastated mind. My head faltered, and I somehow managed to suck in several deep breaths.

[The 4th Wall] was right. Maybe, I already knew.

There were simply too many hints.

「I was far too lucky in this world, and」

「Everything in this world seemed to be geared towards my convenience, and」

「At times, this world even felt sloppy.」

If all of these were the result of the 'Most Ancient Dream's blessing, then…

「The genesis of all the world-lines, the original world-line.」

I raised my head back up, then clenched my energyless fists slowly. [The 4th Wall] was no longer around, but my mind was calm. No, I had to believe that I was calm.

Only I knew the conclusion of this world.

Giiiii-iiing…

The [Unbreakable Faith] screeched out. I slowly walked forward.

The boy raised his head up from the notebook to look at me.

Tsu-chuchuchu!

“……Uh??"

The boy's eyes, that didn't know anything.

I couldn't avoid that gaze. Those were the eyes of a child who had no one to rely on in this world, somehow managing to carry on day by day.

The boy busy rubbing his eyes hard as if he saw phantoms, was looking at me.

「In order to destroy , the 'Most Ancient Dream' must be stopped.」

I had made up my mind at the beginning of , and even promised the

'Secretive Plotter'. To eliminate the culprit of all these tragedies. And finally, that

opportunity had come.

['Demon King Transformation' is activating.]

Pitch-black wings spread out from the torn shoulder blades. The boy's eyes looking at me widened.

"Ah, ah…??"

A voice that felt so ancient. Right, I used to possess such a voice in the

past, didn't I? I walked one step at a time towards such a child.

['Angel Transformation' is activating.]

As the child's face grew closer, I got to see so many other things. Such as the notebook the boy was scribbling on. There was a chart recording the power balance of the 'Ways of Survival'; it was the very same chart that I compiled once upon a time.

Yu Jung-Hyeok, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Seol-Hwa, Kim Nam-Woon, Anna Croft… Next to the densely packed names, their Stigmata and Skills were recorded. And finally, even the bruising on the back of the boy's hand covering up his own untidy handwriting.

I knew the history this boy had survived, and the future he'd get to live out; what would happen to this child in the future, and what sort of misery lay in wait for him.

「All of those years, just how much of a meaning was in them?」

He'd get targetted by the school gang and suffer serious bullying.

He'd get abandoned by his relatives and start living alone far too soon. And wherever he went, he'd be pursued by the reporters hunting him down.

He'd make a mistake during the university entrance exam and end up in a third-rate school.

He'd get unlucky and pull the shortest straw during the boot camp, and get assigned to the front lines.

He'd fill himself up everyday with triangular-shaped kimbap bought from the local

convenience store.

And eventually, stumble into a job with some no-name company by the skin of his teeth and eke out a living that way.

During the period of ten years, he'd get to finish reading a certain novel, and after surviving by reading that novel, he'd drive everyone he loved to utter misery.

That boy would grow up to become Kim Dok-Ja.

"M-monster…"

The child was opening his mouth while looking at me.

"That's right, I'm a monster."

My appearance was reflected on the boy's irises.

「That monster was this child's future.」

Now was the only chance to stop that monster.

Everything happened in the blink of an eye. Me, trying to rush forward with my sword raised up, and Han Su-Yeong's fist striking me in the face, all of them.

"----!!"

I couldn't really hear her voice. She was shouting something at me. Her reddened eyes were filled with tears. Her fists were pounding down on my chest, before her rough hands tried to hold onto my shoulders.

"…Dok-Ja!!"

I shoved her away. And then, took another step forward. Even though the distance was only a few metres, I couldn't easily cross it. All of my Fables were rebelling against me.

Powerful sparks enveloping my entire frame suppressed me. My feet didn't want to leave the floor, and my hands refused to move.

The child's expression as he looked at me was one of terror. His chin trembled nonstop,

so did his eyes. Those eyes, trying to decipher whether this was reality or not.

[The 'Most Ancient Dream' is questioning your existence.]

The existence that dreamed of all these worlds. And in his dream, I too was nothing more than just another character.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[The 'Most Ancient Dream' is denying your existence.]

As if he wanted to reject reality, the child hugged his head and curled up. "I, I'm, I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok…… I'm……"

The chant that had been recited tens of thousands of times.

「There is a protective barrier around me.」

「Nobody can harm me.」

「Nothing can touch me.」

The thoughts he used to escape from the pain when the gangs beat him up, began leaking out. The power that rendered reality into not-reality.

And that power was now being applied in the opposite manner.

"Ahjus-!!"

This really small but absolute being was now thinking of everything before him as his own delusions. An opaque barrier was generating with the child's figure as its centre, resembling a pitch-black sphere. It was the sturdiest protective barrier that the 'Most Ancient Dream' could create.

I cried out like a devil and rushed towards the barrier to swing my sword. As the worlds collided, a blindingly-bright explosion of light went off.

The blade of the [Unbreakable Faith] easily broke apart and flew in the air. I stared helplessly at the flying blade piece.

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「I can't kill him.」

It was impossible for a way to kill him to exist. If this story began from the dream of the younger me, then the rules of this world were thought up by him, too.

Winds powerfully blowing in from somewhere roughly flipped the pages of the child's fallen notebook. When the flipping stopped, the setting of the 'Ways of Survival' the younger me jotted down could be seen on the page.

- The Disconnected Film Theory: a theory that explains the overlapping of the worldlines in the Ways of Survival, and it…

As the sparks faintly danced about, I dazedly read the contents. I read it, and then, read it some more. I bent down to pick up the broken blade. Then, opened up all the Fables still remaining in me.

I stared at the black sphere surrounding the boy and spoke up. "…… I know you better than anyone in this world."

「Don'ttormentmeDon'ttormentmeDon'ttormentme」

"I'm not trying to torment you."

「I want to run away.」

"I know.

「But, where to?」

The child's story was transmitted to me, while mine also was transmitted to him.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

There were less than two hand spans of broken blade remaining in the [Unbreakable Faith]. However, that was sufficient enough to carry out my plan.

「The method to end the 'Most Ancient Dream'.」

[The 'Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

[Your existence is resonating with the 'Most Ancient Dream'!]

I then stabbed the blade into my neck with every ounce of my energy.

The loud 'Puh-wook!' noise resounded out. Crimson blood dripped onto the floor like teardrops.

"Kim Dok-Ja."

The blood belonged to Yu Jung-Hyeok. The blade was stopped mid-air right before my neck, unable to move an inch. Blue veins were bulging on Yu Jung-Hyeok's hand holding the blade tightly.

"All of you, hold him down!!"

It wasn't just Yu Jung-Hyeok, though – someone had grabbed me from behind to suppress me.

"Dok-Ja-ssi, this is wrong!"

It was Yi Hyeon-Seong.

Both of my arms were grabbed, too. Jeong Hui-Won and Yu Sang-Ah were responsible.

“……Please, stop!"

"There must be another way. There has to be."

Yi Ji-Hye was hugging my waist, while I could see Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong holding onto each of my legs.

And then, I saw Han Su-Yeong pounding on the barrier of the 'Most Ancient Dream' in my stead. "Open up! We didn't come here to harm you! We just want to talk to you for a bit……!"

Even then, the barrier was only getting thicker. I knew the truth; that thing would never open up.

I held the sword's hilt even harder. "This is the only way."

Jang Ha-Yeong shouted out. "Please, please stop!! There's still time! We still have……!"

No, we didn't have time. The longer we wasted here, the harsher and heavier the sparks surrounding us became.

[The 'Most Ancient Dream' is denying your existence.]

The child would continue to 'deny' us. Then, he'd erase his delusions. He would turn the reality of another world into something that's not reality.

That was why, the only one who could do this was…

Ku-gugugu……

Thick fog suddenly came in from somewhere, and I picked up on the ominous power of Chaos. Yu Jung-Hyeok's expression as he held the blade became weird.

"Y-you bastard……”

As he staggered about, the pitch-black Fable leaked out from his mouth. That Fable gurgled out and travelled down his chin, hit the floor, and finally, formed the silhouette of a person.

The blade of the [Heaven Shaking Sword] gleamed between the jet-black coat; a man who only lived for this moment was standing there now.

「The Secretive Plotter.」

The being who had even forgotten about his real name after experiencing countless regression turns. The man who lived only for the purpose of revenge was here.

He glanced in my direction, before slowly approaching the protective barrier.

The 'Secretive Plotter' ignored the dancing sparks and walked forward. In that exact moment, the 'Most Ancient Dream's' Fable came streaming into me.

「'I wanted to become like Yu Jung-Hyeok.'」

Goosebumps rose up on my arms gradually.

Why have I forgotten about the memories that ruled over my childhood?

「The protagonist stronger than anyone in this universe.」

It was obvious that the 'Secretive Plotter' wouldn't be affected by the sparks. Just how many times have I thought about this within my imaginations continuing on like some kind of obsession?

「No human can control every type of imagination.」

Just how often have I recited that name every time bruises appeared on my arms and legs, and every time my lips burst open?

「And that's why the most ideal person to end this dream had already been determined.」

My sword slowly slipped out of my grasp. From here onwards, it was no longer my job.

I just couldn't get in the way of this world's most fair revenge.

"Secretive Plotter!!"

Han Su-Yeong cried out and ran towards him. So did Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Ji-Hye, and even the kids, too. As if they had realised what the horrible thing he was about to commit would be.

Unfortunately, my companions couldn't approach him as if a transparent wall was blocking them. And only the 'Secretive Plotter' alone crossed the platform and reached the bench with the child sitting on it.

He wielded the sword loaded with the powers of [Breaking the Sky Energy] and sliced apart the pitch-black sphere. When he did, the child curling up like a new born baby curled up even further.

"I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok. I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok. I'm……”

The child continued to tremble under the faint rays of light.

[[You are not Yu Jung-Hyeok.]]

The regressor who had forgotten about his name through the eternity of regressions.

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Such a man was now announcing his name.

"I am 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'."

Fin.

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That was the real voice of Yu Jung-Hyeok, the one that lived through 1864 lives. That voice was the evidence of the history starting from the 0th turn all the way to 1863rd.

And the protagonist of that voice was saying this: he was none other than Yu Jung-Hyeok, and he was none other than the protagonist of the 'Ways of Survival'.

"I, I'm, I……”

The child shuddered pitifully, yet he couldn't open his eyes. As if he already knew his entire world would crumble the moment he did.

[The 'Most Ancient Dream' is denying his own dream!]

「 This is just an illusion just an illusion just an illusion 」

"This is no illusion."

At the same time as the 'Secretive Plotter' said his piece, sentences began streaming all around the child. They were texts from the 'Ways of Survival' that the boy read, that I read together with him.

Sentences that kept me alive, and eventually would kill me, too.

And a certain man was speaking up within those sentences.

「 "Yi Hyeon-Seong. It's not over yet." 」

「 "Do not worry. I shall definitely end this ." 」

「"I will never forget you, Shin Yu-Seung."」

Those vivid sentences soon became stories. Stories were imagined, and the imagination was recreated as reality in a different world-line.

Not knowing that such a thing was happening in another reality, the boy kept desiring the story's continuation.

「"To the next regression turn, and then, to the next one."」

To survive, the boy imagined. While being pressured by his relatives, while being bullied by the school gangs.

To not feel the pain, he thought about the next part of the story.

「"I shall survive no matter what, and witness the end of these scenarios."」

He felt solace while looking at the unyielding protagonist. And within that solace, he wished for the protagonist to not give up until the end.

「Author-nim, for how long will Yu Jung-Hyeok's regression continue on?」

He wished for this regression journey to never come to an end.

Tsu-chuchu……

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't say anything as he watched the boy's memories stream by.

「He should be remembering every one of these events.」

All those resolutions he had never forgotten from the 0th turn all the way to the 1863rd.

My companions and I also watched those. Yu Jung-Hyeok had collapsed after the

'Secretive Plotter' left his body; he was groaning heavily from all the memories flooding in. Shin Yu-Seung was continuously shedding her tears, while Yi Ji-Hye plopped down on the ground. Yi Hyeon-Seong and Jeong Hui-Won too were trying to endure while supporting each other's trembling shoulders.

Now, they all knew. They knew now that the Secretive Plotter needed to be compensated for his life.

"B-but, but, even then…"

Shin Yu-Seung muttered as if she was in a religious trance, and looked up at me. As if

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she wanted me to tell her how to overcome this situation.

"Secretive Plotter! Stop! I said, stop!!"

Only Han Su-Yeong alone resisted the shower of sparks right before her face and swung her fists constantly towards the empty air. However, the 'Secretive Plotter'

didn't look back.

「And so, the 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse' had reached the end of his pilgrimage.

」

The [Heaven Shaking Sword] that broke over and over again only to be patched up, was now quietly crying out.

「Finally, his Constellation backer was before his eyes.」

"It was you."

The child's shoulder trembled pitifully as if he was having a nightmare.

「This was a weak lifeform that could be killed off in an instant.」

His Heaven Shaking Sword screeched out viciously once more. This was the sword that cut down countless Constellations. Not even Poseidon, not Zeus, not Nuwa, and not even the Dokkaebi King could escape from this very blade. No star in existence could survive after daring to oppose him.

Here was the opportunity for his revenge, reached after experiencing 1864 lifetimes.

The [Heaven Shaking Sword] slowly moved.

"Secretive Plotter!! No, wait! Yu Jung-Hyeok-!!"

Neither Han Su-Yeong nor I could stop it. This event, it simply had to happen. Shin Yu-Seung tightly holding my hand was crying. Unable to close her mouth, and gasping uncontrollably.

Everything would end with this.

I would no longer need to consume someone else's story. Yu Jung-Hyeok would be

freed from his lengthy journey of regression.

「However, why wasn't that sword moving even now?」

The Secretive Plotter's Heaven Shaking Sword continued to wander in the air. The blade that threatened to cut the boy down at any moment was now simply brushing aside the eggshell-like protective barrier around the child, instead.

「Even though its outer shell has been shattered, this bird couldn't fly

off to anywhere.

」

The boy's figure trembled uncontrollably. Ominous-feeling Fables were now circling around him.

「"Hey, this guy's drawing something in his notebook again!"」

「"Tsk, tsk. He's so much like his mother……"」

「"Are you Kim Dok-Ja? By any chance, do you know where your mother is right now?

Mm… I see. Don't you resent your mother? What was your mother like in the past?"」

「"For how long are you going to keep quiet? If you don't say anything, the whole world will misunderstand you."」

Slice.

The [Heave Shaking Sword] wandering in the air accurately cut down the sentences of those memories. The boy's trembling shoulders shook a little less than before.

「But, why?」

My mind was thrown into disarray.

「How come?」

It was then that a true voice resounded out.

[[… Is this boy 'him'?]]

A man with a hulking physique rose up from the Secretive Plotter's shadow. It was the 999th turn's Yi Hyeon-Seong. The Plotter nodded

his head.

"Correct. This kid is my sponsor."

[[Now this pisses me off. This little kid was the culprit of it all??]]

Even the 999th turn's Kim Nam-Woon and Yi Ji-Hye were here, too.

They were the Outer Gods that endured the 999th turn. It wasn't only Yu Jung-Hyeok who wanted to destroy , and end the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

"No."

[[What was that? In that case…]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' looked around at his vicinity instead of replying.

The clamour of people flooding in and out just to catch the subway could be heard coming from the platform in the distance. He looked back, and the train we rode on was already gone.

Instead, there was a Daehwa Station-bound train that would ferry passengers to their unknown destination in this normal world. And then, the crowd of people brushing past us as if they couldn't see us at all.

- This station is Daehwa…

People climbing aboard the subway even before the passengers could disembark first; people pushing and shoving each other, or hurling insults in other's directions. A granny was pushed aside by the disembarking wave of people and fell down. No one tried to aid her. The very first person to witness her plight was an old man sitting on the seats reserved for pregnant mothers.

He stared at the granny for a little while, before unfurling a newspaper he pulled out to cover up his vision. And above that newspaper, a headline of an article could be seen.

- The criminal's essay will be published.

It was an article that I knew quite intimately. Many people read that, chatted about, and then, forgot about that article.

「A tragedy with nothing special about it. At most, it was a tragedy that occurred to just one life.」

The 'Secretive Plotter' and the Outer Gods were now looking at my Fable. Their sorrowful eyes were looking at this tragedy that only went on for a little over a dozen or so years.

[[… Oh, you sad, pitiful child.]]

I shuddered almost out of pure shock from those words.

My own tragedy couldn't even compare to their pain. The sin of creating an even bigger tragedy because of my own should not be forgiven.

[[Oh, hear ye, my dear god. I have endured a truly lengthy period of time just to meet you, but……]]

The 999th turn's Uriel reached out and touched the younger me's cheek.

[[You are this universe's most powerless existence, aren't you.]]

The child's body shuddered once more.

I staggered unsteadily back to my feet.

[[… Is that why you needed us? This is a very cruel request for help, indeed.]]

[[You couldn't even control your own imagination, is that it?]]

Something was wrong. A blade… I, I needed to find a blade.

The 999th turn's characters were exchanging glances. For a quiet moment there, they were looking into each other.

The first one to open her mouth was the 999th turn's Yi Ji-Hye.

[[It's fine with me. However, will it be okay with you? You came here just for this, didn't

you?]]

It was rather clear who she was talking to.

The 'Secretive Plotter' paused for a little bit before replying to her.

"It has been difficult."

This story was not something that could be wrapped up with that single line. The tragedy he had experienced must not be simplified like that.

"I wondered why it happened to me. I often wanted to give it all up. I lost count on how many times I thought about killing myself." The 'Secretive Plotter' keeping silent for a long time eventually continued on. "However, someone ensured that I could never give up."

His hatred-filled eyes were not directed at the body. No, he was glaring at the boy's Fable.

Both the 999th turn's Uriel and Yi Hyeon-Seong knelt down and gently picked the child up in an embrace. Yi Ji-Hye and Kim Nam-Woon then held the boy's cold hands.

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke up as if to proclaim to the world.

"Now, open your eyes, Kim Dok-Ja."

The eyelashes of the child soaked in cold sweat trembled softly. His whole body shuddered uncontrollably as if he was fighting against a lengthy nightmare.

And so, how long passed by like this? The child's eyelids slowly opened up.

"Ah, ah, ah……"

The boy's eyes were now looking at the world. He was now looking at the things he once believed to be his own delusions. He was now looking at the Archangel and the Emperor of Steelsword embracing him, and at the hands of both the Demon of Delusions and the Naval Admiral. And finally…

"Really… really……?"

And the protagonist of the story he had been watching for so long was right before him.

"Indeed. This is not a dream."

Inside this weighty silence where no one spoke, the sound of something shattering could be heard.

Tears trickled down from the child's eyes. I knew what those tears meant, and I also knew what the 'Secretive Plotter' and the Outer Gods had done just now, and that was why I felt so tortured inside.

「That, that couldn't have been their choice.」

A being that lived with a certain story for a very long time would eventually become unable to escape from that very story. Just like how it was for Agares, Metatron, the Apocalypse Dragon, and the Dokkaebi King, it was the same story for the 'Outer Gods', too.

Perhaps, could it be that the choice they made had already been predetermined from the beginning?

I shouted out in a crying voice.

"He's the 'Most Ancient Dream'! He needs to die. If he's not dead, then your tragedies won't end! Your regression, , all of them-!!"

You must not get devoured by that 'story'.

I don't need your sympathy.

What I really truly want isn't a tale like this.

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

The 'Secretive Plotter' was now looking back at me with eyes that I couldn't recognise at all. From within a story that I hadn't read before, he was staring at me.

It wasn't just him, however; Uriel, Yi Ji-Hye, Kim Nam-Woon, and even Yi Hyeon-Seong, too.

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

I dazedly stared at the continuously-rising messages.

「The world's most righteous soldier.」

「The noblest Archangel.」

「The general who doesn't tolerate injustice.」

「The devil filled with hatred towards the world.」

「The regressor who fought against the system called .」

The 'Secretive Plotter' and the 'Outer Gods' were now looking at the world of this child; the world that was filled with nearly-undetectable malice that could only be felt under the careful observation.

Kim Nam-Woon glared at the Fable of such a world and muttered out.

[[Even without , the world remains the same.]]

He sounded as if he finally figured out the enemy he needed to fight from now on. The Fables the 'Secretive Plotter' and the Outer Gods built up were now baring their fangs at the reality surrounding the child.

「At the end of the vast, lengthy pilgrimage, the regressor chose the world he discovered.」

The characters reaching the conclusion were finally breaking out of the tale. While embracing their god, they were now heading towards a brand new story.

I shook my head like a madman and crawled towards them.

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This must not happen.

I made a promise. To end the 'Most Ancient Dream'. To end this tragedy.

My hand barely managing to feel around the ground discovered the broken blade.

I did it. With this, I…

[[Kim Dok-Ja.]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' called out to me. When I raised my head, he continued on with what he wanted to say.

[[Do you remember the first scenario?]]

The first scenario, the 'proof of credentials'.

The 'Secretive Plotter' and the Constellations saw me for the first time

during that scenario.

[[You said this to other people back then. That the scenario's clear condition wasn't to

'kill humans'.]]

I recalled the promise I made to him.

- Please finish the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

The world was blanketed by the blinding rays of light, and my vision grew blurry. My surprised companions quickly gathered around me.

[You have fulfilled your promise with the 'Secretive Plotter'.]

The young Kim Dok-Ja, now embraced by the Emperor of Steelsword and the Archangel, was looking at me. Light was starting to return to the child's eyes that used to wallow in the lengthy dream.

When was the dream supposed to end? That would be…

「…… When the dream was no longer a dream.」

Only then did everything start making sense.

It was the same thing as the 'Most Ancient Dream' ending the moment Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 'Ways of Survival' reached this place.

The sounds of the next train arriving could be heard coming from the distance.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter' has reached his ■■.]

At the same time as the 'Secretive Plotter' gave his signal, my companions and I got sucked into the train that arrived behind us.

"This place is the epilogue of that story."

The characters that saved my childhood were now disappearing beyond the door.

Just like the 1863rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok who killed himself to cross over to the new world-line, they were now stepping into a world that I didn't know.

Within the rays of light, I saw Yu Jung-Hyeok's faint smile.

He looked… liberated.

[Constellation 'Secretive Plotter's' ■■ is 'Most Ancient Dream'.]

Fin.

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['The 4th Wall' is reactivating!]

The light in the world flickered on and off several times. I felt the sensation of my body being sucked into somewhere, and within this half-awake consciousness, the friction noise of the train's wheel meeting the railroad tracks filled up my head.

I couldn't accept this.

Even though I knew that this wasn't a matter requiring my acceptance, I still found it hard to swallow.

「Why did the 'Secretive Plotter' make such a decision?」

I couldn't forget his final expression.

How could he make such a face? He didn't get to complete what he truly wanted, so how come…

「Wh at did Sec ret ive Pl otter re ally wa nt, th en?」

All of the memories regarding the Secretive Plotter flitted in and out of my head.

The story I got to learn through the original novel's texts – while enduring such a vast, indeterminable amount of time, what did Yu Jung-Hyeok hope to see at the end of this road?

Just what was it exactly that he expected to encounter?

「[[Even if it's not a conclusion you wanted… Do not think of this world as a failed regression turn.]]」

Only those words remained stuck in my brain like a curse.

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「Kim Dok Ja」

'The 4th Wall' warned me in a stiff voice as if to punish my arrogance.

「Thi s not a pro blem y ou ca n ju dge」

The wall was right. Even after that guy had left, I couldn't escape from being this damn

'Constellation'.

Under the brilliant radiance, the figures of 999th turn's Uriel, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Kim Nam-Woon, and Yi Ji-Hye scattered away.

Could he really become happier with this?

He made this choice himself, so was that his happiness, then?

He was a being born in the tragedy, so maybe, he wasn't aware of that choice being another tragedy?

The Fables of the younger me and the 'Secretive Plotter' were getting further away.

The man looking back in this direction for one last time was no longer Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「Be ca use he's b orn in th e tra gedy ca n he fin ish th e tra gedy too」

「"This place is the epilogue of that story."」

The ancient tale I've been reading concluded, just like that.

[You have reached the ■■ of all the scenarios.]

[You have now learned of the secret of the world.]

The only remaining topic for us was on how to live the story's 'ever after'. The part of the story that the 'Ways of Survival' didn't tell me.

[The 'Most Ancient Dream' has ended.]

Abruptly, a certain thought popped up in my head. Something that had been forgotten

after being swept up in the situation.

The Dokkaebi King told me this: that this world was a dream of the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

「In that case, what happens to the characters of the dream after the dream has come to an end?」

The characters from the 999th turn and the 'Secretive Plotter' had all escaped from the role of 'Characters' and were freed from the dream through their own will.

If so, what would happen to other people, then?

After the dream was over, the people from the dream would……

[Final scenario clear reward has arrived.]

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The noises of a cheek being slapped around resounded out; under the flickering subway lights, Kim Dok-Ja slowly opened his eyes.

"Hey, you. You awake now?"

He saw Han Su-Yeong's face up close as she roughly held him by his collars.

“……What happened?"

"That's what I want to ask you."

Kim Dok-Ja massaged his head as if he was suffering from migraine, and stood up from his spot.

"Where are we?"

"Inside the subway. Time for us to head back home, I guess."

Han Su-Yeong saying those words seemed rather refreshed, for some reason.

The train clunked and shook around. The darkness outside the windows gently wavered

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about.

"Dok-Ja-ssi, are you alright?"

His companions discovered him and walked in closer. Yu Sang-Ah, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Jeong Hui-Won, Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Gil-Yeong, Yi Ji-Hye, Jang Ha-Yeong…… and even Yu Jung-Hyeok, they were all here.

「Everyone was alright.」

Kim Dok-Ja slowly looked around him. There was no other presence within the subway. It was likely that this train was the same one they rode in earlier.

「Are we really safe now?」

"I've treated your injuries. Once we return to [The 4th Wall], we should entrust you to Seol-Hwa-ssi's care, but……"

Yu Sang-Ah feeling for Kim Dok-Ja's pulse faintly smiled. His companions approached him one by one. However, even though their gazes were fixed on him, none of them managed to readily open their mouths.

Unexpectedly, the first one to do so was Yu Jung-Hyeok. Rather than approaching Kim Dok-Ja like everyone else, he leaned against the subway's seat at an angle and glared outside the window.

The universe's Fable was coming undone on the outside. The once-tangled roll of thread was turning into dust and scattering away one strand at a time.

"It's the ."

Fables existing in countless world-lines were illuminating the space by scattering their bright lights. The they had been living in was right there. The world they cursed and resented, but still couldn't forsake, was slowly disappearing while emitting the most radiant light for the last time.

As Kim Dok-Ja dazedly stared at that spectacle, Shin Yu-Seung tightly squeezed his hand.

"It's over now."

Overcome by a certain emotion, Yi Hyeon-Seong suddenly broke down in tears. The bear-like man who never showed a single drop of tears no matter what transpired began sobbing away uncontrollably. Jeong Hui-Won watched him and bit her lower lip as her nose tip began stinging, as well. Yi Ji-Hye raised her head, perhaps not wanting to shed her own tears.

"It… really is over."

It was indeed over. This long and expansive tale had finally come to an end.

Kim Dok-Ja stared at the distancing meteor shower. He stared, and then, stared again.

As if she knew what he was thinking about right now, Han Su-Yeong addressed him.

"This isn't because you read that novel, you know? You also had no idea, right?"

Companions nodded their heads. They were also aware; they knew that this event might not end like this.

It was just that, they were quietly staring at Kim Dok-Ja and his Fable.

「The world that couldn't be lived in, unless one read it.」

The child who had to read something, anything, if he wanted to live.

They were saved many times over by such a child.

「Reading something in order to survive – that was the same story for everyone.」

"It would've been fine by just reading it, but Dok-Ja-ssi, you tried to change the story by yourself. I think that's more than enough."

Jeong Hui-Won said that.

The one who had never reached the end of this world, starting from

the beginning of the 'Ways of Survival' all the way to its conclusion. She softly smiled and patted Kim Dok-Ja on his shoulder.

"So, what do you think? Is this the conclusion you wanted to see?"

Kim Dok-Ja couldn't reply to her. He was too busy wiping away the tears clouding his

vision to do that.

「So that he could see with his own eyes the view of the world he established.」

Kim Dok-Ja slowly opened his eyes, and the subway's pitch-black windows were reflected in his irises. The faces of his companions could be seen mirrored on the glass.

As if, that was a group photo with the universe serving as its background.

「The conclusion of this world that he so dearly wished to see.」

“……I'm looking at it right now."

As if they were waiting for those words, Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong began wiping away Kim Dok-Ja's tears. He tightly hugged both of the kids.

It was then, someone asked this question.

"We'll be happy after this, right?"

Only the vibration of the train leaving the station resounded out within this silence like a pulse.

Maybe, this train would never go back; they would never be able to visit that station, ever again.

They would forge ahead towards a brand new terminal.

As everyone stewed within their own thoughts, quite unexpectedly it was Yi Ji-Hye who threw out a realistic question first.

“……By the way, what will happen to the world-line we've been living in?"

When everyone gazed at her, she scratched her cheeks in embarrassment and continued on.

"You know, that thing. If the Dokkaebi King is to be believed, this world is merely a dream of the 'Most Ancient Dream', but if that dream is over, then……”

For sure, the time flow of the world they were living in froze after the [Final Wall] was destroyed. In that case, even if they returned to that world by riding on this train…

[It'll be fine. Our world is functioning normally.]

"Aha, I see. That's a relief…… Ehng??"

Yi Ji-Hye stared at Kim Dok-Ja, then at Yi Hyeon-Seong, and even at Jeong Hui-Won and Yu Sang-Ah. No matter who she looked at, though, they were all making the exact same expression as her.

"Who replied just now??"

And then, everyone looked up at the air at the same time. A ball of fine fur was floating up there.

[Ba-aht?]

The eyes of the companions narrowed down to slits.

[Eh-ba-aht.]

Biyu began sweating buckets in the air, but eventually, sighed out grandly and spoke up.

[You knew something was up already anyway, so why are you so surprised?]

*

The companions heard the explanation from Biyu.

The contents, when simplified, were like this.

[The world-line hasn't been annihilated yet. I don't know the reason, but…… the stopped time of the world is beginning to get written again, you see. Although the worldview shook around a lot after all the large Fables crumbled at the same time, it'll still take several thousands of years for the world to die naturally.]

The sights of the world they used to live in could be seen faintly just beyond the subway's windows. The frozen time of the world was beginning to move once more.

「Uriel was slowly opening her eyes within this devastation.」

.

.

.

.

「The Black Flame Dragon was asleep, curled up into a ball. And… 」

「Wrapped up tightly within the Somersault Cloud, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal was staring up at the skies above.」

The Constellations were alive, too.

Even the Maritime War God, the Goryeo's Number One Swordsman… Everyone was still alive. Even though they had lost their previous lustre, they were still drawing breaths in this world-line.

Biyu spoke up as she looked at those Constellations.

[still remains. The channel system has crumbled down, and Constellations can no longer wield as much power as they used to, but still, it was such a huge Fable that it'll take some time for it to completely crumble down.]

A couple of my companions sighed in relief. A sigh that they themselves couldn't really understand.

Yi Ji-Hye asked again. "But, the dream is over, right? So how can this world continue to exist?"

[I already told you, I also don't know. Be smart enough to listen properly when someone tells you something the first time.]

“…Well, it sure is a relief, but since when did you learn to speak like this? Besides all that, look how rude you are! Ahjussi! Listen to how Biyu talks! This creepy kid, until now……!"

Kim Dok-Ja shifted his gaze over to Biyu, prompting the latter to feign complete ignorance and open her mouth as if she didn't know anything.

[Ah-bah-aht?]

Everyone broke out into a helpless chuckle. Yi Ji-Hye panted angrily and just before she could shout something, Kim Dok-Ja reached out and wordlessly hugged Biyu.

This bundle of fur that used to be so tiny at the beginning of the scenarios was now so big that one couldn't wrap their arms around it.

Yu Jung-Hyeok watching that spectacle spoke up. "…… Maybe, it's the last miracle."

A miracle, was it? That was certainly a word that didn't suit him. Because, that was the one word he believed the least. Even then, his utterance loosened the expressions of the companions.

"Then really, everything has been resolved with this."

"And now, all we need to do is to buy the big house where we can live together!"

The kids spoke up, only to be shot down by Han Su-Yeong.

"Our Nebula can't go on anymore. This idiot, he completely drained all of its finances in the Final Scenario, you know."

"We can always make more money later, right?! I mean, just who are we??"

Everyone broke into smiles while looking at Yi Gil-Yeong triumphantly shouting out.

But then, someone quickly threw out another question, perhaps fearful of these smiles suddenly coming to an end.

"What do you all want to do now?"

Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong looked at each other after hearing that and yelled out.

"The Han River!"

"The ocean!"

"Pizzas!"

"Fried chickens!"

As the two children began arguing, someone else piped up next.

"I'd like to go to the place that I used to live."

It was Jang Ha-Yeong.

"The place where you used to live……”

Yu Sang-Ah's expression became uncertain after hearing that. It wasn't just her, though; they all knew the truth. They knew that the places they used to live no longer existed. The homes where their stories had been kept before the advent of apocalypse, had all disappeared now.

But, could this be magic? Suddenly, the view outside the windows changed. The scenery of the space seemed to scatter, and what replaced it was…

"Maybe, it really is a miracle……"

…The sight of Seoul, the one they were intimately familiar with.

And on the subway map where every name had been erased off, names of various stations began reappearing.

[Next stop is 'Hongjae' Station.]

Jang Ha-Yeong's steps took her towards the exit. From beyond the wrecked terminal, the sight of her old suburb could be seen. The train's speed was gradually slowing down.

Jeong Hui-Won asked her. "You still want to go, even though there might be nothing left?"

Jang Ha-Yeong nodded her head. Jeong Hui-Won could only reply with a wry grin. Like how it was with everyone, there were some things that had to be confirmed even if you knew the end results already.

"Okay. Let's meet again back in the Industrial Complex later."

The train's doors opened, and Jang Ha-Yeong made her exit. She looked around with a disbelieving expression, only to turn back as if she abruptly remembered something she wanted to say.

"Kim Dok-"

However, the train started again even before her words could be heard.

The next person to speak was Yi Ji-Hye, silently staring at the map until then. "There's a place I want to go, too."

Jeong Hui-Won asked her, sounding as if she already knew where the younger girl wanted to go. "You want me to go with you?"

"Nah, I'll be fine alone. This is what I want to do."

Yi Ji-Hye's grin was soft, her expression light. Jeong Hui-Won's hand rising up sheepishly went back down.

"See you guys in a sec."

Yi Ji-Hye disembarked. The school building she used to attend was visible in the distance.

The subway's doors closed once more. Jeong Hui-Won asked a question. "Is there anyone else who wants to go somewhere?"

No one answered back. Most of the companions had no places they wanted to return to. However, that didn't mean they didn't have a place to return to.

Yu Sang-Ah then asked everyone. "We are all going to get off at the same place, yes?"

"Can't we switch trains somewhere? Looks like we'll have to hoof it from Jongro."

Han Su-Yeong grumbled and scanned the subway map.

Their destination was Gwanghwamun, the location of the [Industrial Complex].

"We gotta think up of what to tell the others. It's not like we can tell them everything, right?"

[Next stop is 'Jongro 3rd street' Station.]

Everything was resolved now, but in reality, it'd be not like that. They would be facing the reality of new daily life after their return, that's why.

「The train's doors were opening up.」

Yu Sang-Ah holding the children's hands lightly hopped off to the station's platform with a soft "Eusha!" She looked back and saw that both Yi Hyeon-Seong and Jeong Hui-Won had also lightly hopped past the safety line on the ground.

"What are you doing, not getting off?"

That left only three people behind.

"Kim Dok-Ja."

It was unknown who among Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok called that name out first. The former asked with a questioning pair of eyes.

"We are getting off together, right?"

[Someone has activated 'Lie Detection Lv… ']

That prompted Kim Dok-Ja to smirk softly.

"Of course. We should."

['Lie Detection' has confirmed 'Kim Dok-Ja's' words as truth.]

"Let's go."

Kim Dok-Ja took a step forward and lightly slapped the backs of the other two. That caused the two to stagger forward, as well. The frowning Han Su-Yeong muttered something in Kim Dok-Ja's direction, while Yu Jung-Hyeok grasped the hilt of his sword, his eyes glaring nonstop.

Kim Dok-Ja spoke to the latter. "…… You do know that the scenarios are over, right?

From now on, it'll be a criminal offence to carry around a sword……"

"What a foolish utterance that is. It's not over yet, Kim Dok-Ja."

"He's right. We haven't even figured out who tls123 is, and also……"

The subway's doors were slowly closing; the story of a new world was streaming within the noisy clamour of their voices. Kim Dok-Ja laughed in genuine happiness, and the kids continued to bicker away.

A tale of this new world continued to flow on.

But then, just as the subway's doors closed, Han Su-Yeong looked behind her with a

slightly unsure, hard-to-read face of someone that left something behind.

Even Yu Jung-Hyeok looked back, too.

The only person who didn't was Kim Dok-Ja.

Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok's gazes ran into each other, and they began growling at the same time.

"What you looking at?!"

"I should ask you that, you basta……"

And then, the doors closed. The subway began moving again in silence. It was leaving the station that welcomed the beginning of a new story to enter the railway of infinity.

Names written on the subway map began disappearing one by one.

The sight of bickering Yu Jung-Hyeok and Han Su-Yeong could be seen in the distance.

Then, the sight of brightly smiling kids holding onto Kim Dok-Ja's hands, as well as Yu Sang-Ah looking up into the sky while shielding

her eyes, could be seen, too.

「And I was quietly staring at that scene.」

That prompted 'The 4th Wall' to ask me.

「Will th is re ally be o kay?」

Right in the next second, my transparent figure emerged from the empty space.

Accompanied by a slight case of dizziness, my body fully materialised and revealed itself above the subway.

[The percentage of memories you currently retain is '51%'.]

I smiled wryly. "This was the only way."

I looked up, and the messages clogging up the message log all floated up at once.

[You have cleared the 'Final Scenario'.]

[You are the only person who knows the secret of this world.]

[Currently, the 'Most Ancient Dream' is absent.]

[The world's time will not flow if the dream doesn't continue.]

These were the messages only visible to me.

[You have earned the qualification to take over the role of the 'Most Ancient Dream'.]

[Will you continue with the dream?]

If this dream was to be stopped now, then the world would forever be frozen still.

「It truly was a cruel thing; the world that barely managed to gain a chance at happiness stopping for all eternity.」

Although it started off as a tragedy, this universe was already born. Even though that was the case, there were still some that searched for happiness in this universe, and they had finally reached the terminals they always wanted to get to.

「Yu Seung ee and Gil Yeong ee wi ll be s a d」

"I know."

「Y ou are de cei ving th em」

"……At least I didn't lie to them." I looked up at the sky and carried on. "A part of me definitely exited the train with them, didn't it."

There was a certain skill I got from the 'Secretive Plotter' while returning from the 1863rd turn.

「[[What will do you now for skills? I'm sure you haven't earned a new skill over there.]]」

「"Indeed, I haven't earned any skills, but… Is it possible to receive this type of a reward, instead?"」

「[[It is possible.]]」

What I received back then was, technically speaking, not a 'skill' per se.

[Currently, 'Bookmark' skill is in activation.]

[Due to the blessing of the 'Most Ancient Dream', the applicable skill's activation period has been changed to infinite.]

[Currently, the sixth Bookmark is in activation.]

[The Character registered in the sixth Bookmark is 'Director of the False End'.]

The Director of the False End, the 1863rd turn's Han Su-Yeong.

[Your degree of understanding on the applicable individual is very high!]

[Exclusive skill 'Avatar Lv.???' is currently in activation!]

[You have used up 49.00% of your memories to generate an avatar.]

[Due to the influence of the world-line, the connection to your avatar has been cut off.]

[The applicable avatar will possess its own free will and act accordingly.]

"……This is the right way."

I felt around the lost portion of my memories, now faint, and staggered unsteadily.

My 'other me' would continue to live on, oblivious that he was an avatar. He'd live in a huge house with the other companions.

He'd go to the ocean with Gil-Yeong-ee, and eat pizzas with Yu-Seung-ee. He'd get to see Yi Ji-Hye admitted to a university, and then, he'd hand over the congratulatory bouquet of flowers to Yi Hyeon-Seong and Jeong Hui-Won.

He'd go around house hunting with Yu Sang-Ah, and search for tls123 with Yu Jung-Hyeok.

And then, he'd get to read the novel Han Su-Yeong wrote.

That would be my salvation.

From the beginning till the end, I was always the one being saved.

So, this was my small bit of atonement for their sakes.

「Y ou wi ll re gret th is you wo n t ev er me et th em ag ain」

I smiled without a sound.

"But, I can still see them, right?"

Just like how it used to be, a really long time ago.

And so, this story would continue on in that manner.

“……That's enough for me right now."

I stared at the back of the subway disappearing into the darkness.
Now, the figures of my companions couldn't be seen all that well.

「And everyone lived happily ever after.」

I always hated that phrase.

However, the current me dearly wished for that phrase to become true.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation' has reached his ■■.]

[You have become the 'Most Ancient Dream'.]

The disappearing lights in the distance resembled the Constellations that still remembered me.

And with that, my endless voyage got underway.

[Your ■■ is 'Eternity'.]

Fin.

TL: There it is, the end of the main storyline. The 'epilogue' side stories will begin from December 22th in Korea. I shall try to get them out as soon as they become available to me.



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OMNISCIENT READER
WEBNOVEL
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전지적 독자 시점

The panoramic view of the cosmos could be seen beyond the pitch-black window. I rested my forehead against the cold glass and wordlessly stared at that dark world.

I couldn't tell how long it had been. I wanted to look back; if I did, then maybe, they would still be sitting in their seats even now, so I thought.

「Kim Dok-Ja finally stopped crying.」

"I didn't cry, you dumbass."

「He lied, too.」

"……Just for how long are you going to stay as the narrator? The story's over now."

[The 4th Wall] cackled on. I felt slightly encouraged by that laughter and took another look beyond the window.

The ones I wanted to see were no longer reflected on the glass. The planet Earth I used to live had grown distant beyond my reach.

Of course, that didn't mean I wasn't there.

['Avatar' skill is currently active.]

[Due to the separation of the world-line, the connection to the 'Avatar' has been cut-off.]

[Your Avatar will continue to live his life with its own ego.]

The me of 49%.

[The applicable Avatar will no longer be under your control.]

That guy would never realise that he was an Avatar. He'd simply live the life of ever after along with the companions as Kim Dok-Ja.

「W hy 49%, tho ugh?」

"I was trying to divide exactly by 50% each, but it didn't work out."

「W hy 49%, tho ugh?」

The exact same question again; it was impossible to hide anything from [The 4th Wall].

"You already know why."

「N ot v ery li ke y ou」

"No, it is exactly like me."

Something that the idiotic, immature, and selfish during the crucial moments 'Kim Dok-Ja' would have done.

「2%.」

That number was the proof – and the lie – that I remembered my companions far better than my Avatar.

Even if no one knew of this version of me existing here, even if the companions' stories had come to an end like that… But, at the very least, I swore to myself that I'd never forget about them.

「Y ou re gre tting it?」

A soft noise came from the clunking subway. I was treated to the view of a completely empty subway interior. The handles no one held onto limply shook about.

「Don t fe el so lo nely」

"I'm not."

I slowly regulated my breathing.

I had already experienced a similar situation before. It was also like this back when I became the 'Demon King of Salvation' and fell into the story's horizon. In a way, my situation was better than back then. Well, I wasn't currently suffering from the penalty of leaving the scenario, after all.

If there was one thing different from back then, it'd be…

「I'd never be able to meet my companions.」

"……Do I have to stay inside this subway forever?"

「S t a y?」

"I'm asking if I can go outside."

[The 4th Wall] remained silent as if to ponder what I was asking here, before making its reply.

「Th ere is no con cept of 'access' in t his p la ce」

"What do you mean?"

「T his p la ce is a sanctum. A p la ce whe re the 'Most Ancient Dream' sle eps」

After I heard that, it began to slowly dawn on me.

Every world-line related to the 'Ways of Survival' was a dream of the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

「All the worlds were dreams that were given life in this place.」

Along with a 'Flash!' all the windows of the subway transformed into display screens.

At first, I mistook them for the TAS advertisement installed in the special area within the subway network. Scenes from various scenarios were streaming past the windows. Of course, there was no way that I was looking at mere advertisements.

Tsu-chuchuchu……

A vague migraine assaulted me. The sights of the world-lines scattered around the

universe were now streaming by.

Only then did I gain a new appreciation of just what kind of an existence I had become.

「He was now the 'Most Ancient Dream'.」

My shaky steps took me closer to the window. The screen gently trembled like the surface of water, looking fragile enough to be broken at any time I wanted to.

「Kim Dok-Ja was scared.」

I didn't need someone to tell me that to know.

Every 'story' in this world existed only because a reader read them.

「If he doesn't watch, the world will come to a stop.」

Staring at the world and dreaming endlessly…

「…… This was the weight the 'Most Ancient Dream' had to bear.」

I slowly closed my eyes. This was what I chose. And obviously, being able to watch was far better than not being able to.

And on top of that, it was the same thing as me having become the ultimate Constellation that could peek on every world-line out there, so……

"The 4th Wall?"

「Wh at」

"The 'Most Ancient Dream' acted like a Constellation, didn't he?"

Under the guise of a 'Constellation', the previous 'Most Ancient Dream' sent messages during the regression turn I lived in. Although it was the subconscious actions of a child who didn't know anything, there was no denying the fact that such an action nevertheless interfered with the system.

「Cor rect」

"Then, how about me connecting to the world-line I lived in as a 'Constellation'……?"

「Y ou th ink th at wi ll be pos sible?」

"It's not?"

「N ot the pro blem of pos sibil ity or n ot」

I mulled over what that could mean for a bit, before biting my lip, hard.

"……Right, I shouldn't do that. I understand."

I recalled all the hardships my companions and I had to experience to reach this conclusion. We fought to eliminate the Constellations, and to erase the

system. And we succeeded.

But for me to revive after coming this far, now that would……

「Lu ckily y ou can't e ven if y ou wa nted to」

"Why not? I'm the 'Most Ancient Dream' now, aren't I? If I imagined it, it'd become reality, right?"

「Ca n't con trol eve ryth ing just be cau se y ou're the 'Most Ancient Dream'」

Sparks gently danced along with 'Tsu-chuchut!'

It seemed that the current 'me' couldn't fully exercise the 'Most Ancient Dream's'

power to influence.

「Y our mast ery over the dr eam is n't en ough」

…As I thought. If it was that easy to control, then it'd not be called the 'dream' in the first place. I didn't know when it'd be possible, but at least for now, I couldn't do it.

I chewed my lips for a little while, before continuing on. "In that case…… what about just watching?"

It was right then, something inside me wiggled.

The inner 'me' that I couldn't rule over – I sensed this humongous subconsciousness taking root deep within me. This subconsciousness extended its roots towards another world-line, and through these roots, began pulling up the stories of this world.

My vision darkened, then the sights of the world-line spread out like a kaleidoscope.

「It was the view of the world he missed so much.」

I thought I saw the distant lights of the [Industrial Complex]. Then, I saw the backs of my companions headed there. Not a shade of darkness could be spied on their expressions. In the middle of the group as they walked shoulder to shoulder was another Kim Dok-Ja, kitted out in the white coat.

I already knew.

Even though I knew…

My heart crazily pounded away, my breathing getting shallower, faster. I panted heavily and screamed out. I endured the sensation of vomit welling up, shook my head, and opened my eyes.

As I felt for the floor while swimming in dizziness, I realised that I was the only one inside the subway.

「W hat's wr ong? Do n't wan na wat ch?」

I did want to watch. Their happy faces, their expressions of finally escaping from the scenario's hell. I wanted to read the story that I so desperately longed to see. However, I couldn't.

If I did, then without a doubt, I'd want to go back.

"……I have to see it, right? If I don't, the world won't move forward, right?"

「Y ou're al rea dy wat ching」

"What?"

「Sub con sciou sness is a part of con sciou sness. Y ou are al rea dy wat ching the ma

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jor ity of world lines」

"In that case……"

「No ne ed to bur den y ours elf」 [The 4th Wall] spoke as if to console me. 「Y ou d ont h ave to do an yth ing. Y ou're al rea dy wat ching sub con sciou sly an yway」

I could just close my eyes and forget everything. It'd be fine to enjoy myself within the dream just like a pure, innocent child with no guilt weighing me down. [The 4th Wall]

was telling me that there was absolutely no reason to mull over the tragedy once more and get hurt in the process.

「However, Kim Dok-Ja wasn't a child.」

"I can't do that," said I, while wiping away the cold sweat. All these world-lines were my sin. I created them, and I destroyed them. "I must see them."

And this was the only way to atone for them.

As I slowly stood back up, the world-lines appeared on the windows.

The countless world-lines from the 'Ways of Survival'; the tragedies of someone, brought to reality because I had read them, were now being displayed there.

…Perhaps, there was something I should see first before seeing the stories of my companions.

As if it knew that already, [The 4th Wall] addressed me. 「Wi ll be a v ery long ni ght, Kim Dok Ja」

I'm sure it'll be.

I smiled back. "Don't worry. I can do this properly. This is the story that I adore the most, you see. I know I can definitely watch it until my dying day and not get sick of it."

「But y ou mi ght gr ow to h ate the st ory you l ove the mo st one d ay」

"If that happens……" I spoke while reaching towards the scenes appearing within the

screen. "That will be the price I must pay."

I slowly pressed on the glass, and my fingerprints were engraved on the display.

[The world is now receiving your gaze.]

[A world-line has received the power of life from your consciousness.]

When I reopened my eyes, my body was levitating off the floor, about a hand-span high or so. It felt like I was having an out of body experience.

I was startled by the bustling nearby and looked around to discover a crowd of people.

They walked right into me and past me as if I was invisible to them.

Every one of these tired faces belonged to the office workers on their way home.

This place…

I scanned my vicinity and saw the orange colour denoting the subway's 3rd line.

Surprisingly enough, I found myself floating above the subway platform. The current time and all sorts of subway-related information were displayed on the LED screens installed on the ceiling.

[6:55 PM]

Exactly five minutes before the beginning of the scenario.

Soon enough, the Bulgwang Station-bound train arrived along with the noisy announcement.

People climbed aboard the train one by one. I'd have stopped them if only I could.

However, nothing would change even if I did. The scenario would begin regardless of where you were, anyway. All I could do now was to climb aboard the train along with them and watch all these tragedies unfold.

「And a face Kim Dok-Ja was intimately familiar with was there.」

The Bulgwang Station-bound train no.3434, the car number 3707.

A certain man absent-mindedly staring outside the subway window was there. After

observing his face for a little while, I ended up smirking a little.

When I thought about it, it was pretty obvious.

In the end, all these world-lines were repeated through one man's regressions. So, it was only obvious that I'd encounter this fool at the beginning of the story.

「This world's protagonist.」

Quite obviously, Yu Jung-Hyeok failed to sense my presence.

No, his disinterested gaze remained locked on the outside of the subway, his mind currently submerged in his thoughts. A face that remained calm even when knowing that the scenarios were about to begin; I had no choice but to be impressed by that.

…You're really an amazing guy, aren't you.

I had already witnessed the end of the scenarios, but my skin still trembled simply by re-entering this scene. Yet, you managed to endure these moments dozens, hundreds of times.

The stopped subway train began moving and the time flowed forward once more. That

'thing' should begin soon, if my knowledge served me correctly.

「During the 3rd turn, Yu Jung-Hyeok would begin by killing everyone within this subway car.」

I recalled the beginning of the 3rd turn that I knew of. I wasn't sure which regression turn this was, but the beginning wouldn't be so different from that. I slowly scanned the surroundings and spotted a

man acting suspiciously by the exit.

"Heuh, heuh-euh……”

Several people shifted their gazes over to the man after hearing his intermittent grunts. The man carrying a twisted expression sniggered and looked around himself, then suddenly, pulled out a home-made bomb and a lighter.

「On that day when the paywall began, there was a certain man riding on the same subway car no. 3707 as Yu Jung-Hyeok.」

“…What's that?"

"H-hey, man!"

「The subway terrorist, Choi Han-Gyu.」

The shocked crowd screamed and retreated. People freaked out after witnessing the sparks exploding from the man's hands and stood up from their seats, causing the scene to turn chaotic.

As for Yu Jung-Hyeok, he was quietly staring at that man.

Hey, what are you doing? Hurry up and snatch that away.

According to the storyline I knew, Yu Jung-Hyeok should've suppressed Choi Han-Gyu the moment they climbed aboard the subway and took away the bomb. However, he hadn't done that.

Why was this? Yu Jung-Hyeok's expression, the one I thought was calmness personified, was now pale-white in fright.

It was then, the interior of the train became dark along with the screeching noise.

People's screams morphed into sorrowful cries as they witnessed the

flame being lit up within the darkness.

Something had gone awry here.

「Why isn't Yu Jung-Hyeok making his move?」

Hang on a minute, could this be……?

[7:00 PM]

And then, as the 'Tick!' noise resounded out, the world's rules changed.

[The free service period of the planetary system no. 8612 has concluded.]

[Main Scenario has begun.]

The flames lit up by the terrorist brightly illuminated Yu Jung-Hyeok's face, his eyes

trembling in pure fear. He stood there, unable to do anything. I too, had fallen into a bout of panic. Pages of the Ways of Survival began flipping inside my head.

…Just which regression turn was this?

Was this around the 900th, when he lost his mind? Or around the 1200th?

During which regression turn was this half-wit Yu Jung-Hyeok……?

[Channel #B-7623 has opened.]

[Constellations are entering.]

"Heuh, heuh-heuh, heuh-euh……"

The crowd began running towards the next car of the train, away from the figure of the terrorist clutching the explosive as the man's eyes glared at the surroundings.

[Extremely small number of Constellations are getting interested in Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu'.]

And Yu Jung-Hyeok was still standing in the same spot. The one I knew would never react like this. No, Yu Jung-Hyeok was someone who'd resort to the perfect showmanship to suppress the situation from the get-go. But now, he was making this stupid face that I had never seen before under the terrorist's threat.

One I had never seen before… Never seen…?

It felt like a lightning bolt had gone off in my head.

So, that's what this was, this storyline.

Countless pages flipped inside my head, before the book itself was closed shut.

This was the regression turn that got treated as nothing more than a passing reminiscence back in the 'Ways of Survival'.

Some stories would actually begin from a moment that wasn't written.

"P-please, don't… don't kill me!"

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.

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"Aaaaaahk!"

「This story is the unknown beginning of the 'Ways of Survival'.」

This world-line was the one that I didn't get to read – Yu Jung-Hyeok's 0th turn.

< Epilogue 1. The world of zero (1) > Fin.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was reading the article of a portal site on a person's phone next to him.

- Pro gamer Yu Jung-Hyeok, for how long will he stay under the radar?

Several private matters that other people didn't know, such as discord between the teammates and the tyranny caused by the director's high-handedness, brushed past his mind. However, they were stories from years ago, and he couldn't think of an answer no matter how hard he thought about them.

- We found their home address.

That text message appeared on his smartphone. It was from the detective agency he hired, letting him know that his parents had been located. This was the reason why he decided to step outside the house for the first time in a while.

Yu Jung-Hyeok wished to know about his origins. To find out who gave birth to him, and who had abandoned him. To find out who left behind a little sister in his care when he was on a fast track to success.

Yu Jung-Hyeok oh-so-desperately wanted to find out.

- Ng? Did people like that live here before?

- Eh-iiing, I don't know, either. It's been too long.

Even though he spent a considerable sum to hire the detective agency, the only thing he got in return was an address of an empty house. The agency told him that there was nothing more they could find out.

His parents were gone without a trace, as if they had evaporated from this world. How could such a thing happen, though?

28-year old Yu Jung-Hyeok seemed to exist all alone, without being able to recall a

single memory concerning his parents, or anything nostalgic from his childhood. As if he was a being crafted to be an adult from the moment he was born.

As he rode in this noisily-clunking subway of the 3rd line, Yu Jung-Hyeok was facing a philosophical quandary for the first time ever in his life.

'Just who… am I?'

And that was why he didn't react in time.

"Heuh-euh……!"

"Uwaaaaah!"

He noticed the ruckus only after a short while later.

A giant of a man, with a scraggly beard on his chin; the home-made explosive device clutched in his hand, and the cogged wheel of the lighter turning with pronounced

'tick, tick!'; only after someone smacked past his shoulder did he awake to this surreal situation.

「The terror.」

The lights in the subway went away the next second. The train came to a sudden emergency stop, and the surroundings rapidly filled up with darkness.

Yu Jung-Hyeok felt all the hair on his arms stand up. The inside of his head felt dizzy.

Was this really an act of terror? Something that he'd only ever heard about was really happening in South Korea, too? Where should he evacuate to? Should the police be notified? Or…

[Welcome, everyone. Nice to meet you.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok's dilemmas were carefully extinguished by a small CGI-like lump suddenly appearing in mid-air.

[It's getting tiring to make the same introduction over and over again, but… Anyway, this situation isn't a movie shoot nor is it a terror inciden…… Ng?]

These creatures would later introduce themselves as 'Dokkaebis'.

That unknown existence floating in the air observed the situation within the train and broke out into a wide smile.

[What's this? Hahahahat! Dear Constellations, please take a look over here! The scenarios haven't even begun yet, but something entertaining is already underway!]

The Dokkaebi spoke in a languid but cruel tone of voice and laughed.

[I'm already beginning to look forward to this particular car. I pray that you'll all show us an entertaining tale.]

[Main Scenario has arrived.]

+

Type: Main

Difficulty: F

Clear condition: Please kill one or more lifeforms.

Time limit: 30 minutes

Reward: 300 Coins

Failure: Death

+

And 'hell' began from then.

*

…Bihyung, that fool. He was rather adorable back then; there used to be a moment like that in the past, didn't it?

While listening to the screams resounding out within the subway, I fell into a bit of ill-timed reminiscence.

「Are you saying you want to sign the with me?」

It felt like only yesterday that I met the guy for the first time and discussed getting into an exclusive contract with him.

Back then, I really got lucky. If I failed to sign the contract, then…

「"Kim Dok-Ja. You and I aren't comrades."」

…Then, Bihyung wouldn't have died on that day.

「"I actually wanted to witness your Fable till its end, though."」

Maybe, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' trembling over there might get to feel this sentiment after going through over a thousand regressions.

"……Scenario? What is that?"

The passengers of the car no. 3707 began murmuring after receiving their very first scenario.

Desperate struggles taking place in other locations were then broadcast on the panels in the air – of the scenario where if you didn't kill, you'd be killed instead.

"A g-game…… t-this is a game!" The terrorist Choi Han-Gyu was shouting out.

"Hahahaha!!"

Choi Han-Gyu the terrorist. Information regarding him appeared once in the 'Ways of Survival' via Yu Jung-Hyeok's reminiscence.

「If Choi Han-Gyu manages to survive, he'll evolve into 'demonic bomber' at a later stage.」

Choi Han-Gyu pulled out a hammer from his side, and proceeded to hit the back of a middle-aged man's head right next to him. The victim's knees powerlessly buckled.

"I-if I do this……"

[Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu' has achieved the feat of 'first murder'!]

Choi Han-Gyu began his awakening as he stared at the Coins raining down before him.

Just like how it always had been, the ones that adapted fastest to were those that couldn't adapt to the real world.

"D-did you all see that? I, I, just now?"

"Uwaaah!! Murderer! He's a murderer!!"

Choi Han-Gyu watched the crowd freak out and retreat away from him, and tilted his head. "W-why are you all n-not doing anything? Y-you're all making me look like t-the strange one."

"Don't come near me!"

"M-maybe, you need t-this?"

He smirked towards the crowd, and then suddenly, chucked several tools hanging on his sides towards them. He then wielded the spanner once more and slammed down on the back of the already-dead man.

"I-it's easy. L-like this. You do it l-like this, a-and then…"

Sprays of sticky bloody rose up from the back of the man.

"……Then, e-everyone can become rich."

The timer in the air was ticking down bit by bit.

[Remaining time has decreased.]

[Remaining time: 10 minutes]

Yu Jung-Hyeok wordlessly stared at the spanner that rolled towards his feet. Even then, the crowd showed no signs of movement.

Choi Han-Gyu shook his head as if he was disappointed, and stood up from his spot.

"S-should I just k-kill everyone?"

But then, a man suddenly reached out and grabbed hold of a hammer that Choi Han-

Gyu had thrown.

"F-fuck this… I don't know anymore!"

"Ahjussi! What are you doing??"

This man gripped tight the thrown spanner and began attacking everyone next to him indiscriminately.

「This was the car no.3707 that Yu Jung-Hyeok managed to survive.」

"F-forgive me. I'm sorry……!"

"Uwaaaah!!"

As voices futilely spread out, people began waking up to the new reality. They couldn't tell what kind of a situation this was, but they were sure of one thing.

「They'll die if they don't kill each other.」

[Extremely small number of Constellations are satisfied by the sight of the applicable subway car.]

[Extremely small number of Constellations are expressing their interest in Incarnation

'Choi Han-Gyu'.]

[A Constellation who hasn't revealed their Modifier is sponsoring Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu' with 100 Coins.]

Choi Han-Gyu was laughing in satisfaction at the crowd. As for me, I was watching all these happenings next to this man.

「Kim Dok Ja」

I slowly removed my hand from Choi Han-Gyu's neck.

'…I know already, so don't worry.'

I must not change this story.

Everything happening now was 'events that have already happened'.

I looked at Yu Jung-Hyeok. He was bending down to pick up a spanner that came from Choi Han-Gyu's possession.

I could vividly feel the deep conflict he was in from his expression. It was an expression of a man who had chosen to take a life.

But, why was this? That expression was different from the Yu Jung-Hyeok that I knew.

The one that I knew would gnash his teeth from someone's betrayal; Yu Jung-Hyeok, who didn't trust others easily nor easily made comrades. Yu Jung-Hyeok, who always pursued after the most optimal route, and didn't hesitate killing others ahead of time if they were going to betray him later.

「That was why the 3rd turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok could slaughter the fellow passengers of the same subway.」

However, this Yu Jung-Hyeok before my eyes wasn't from the 3rd turn.

Not from the 4th, not 5th, and definitely not from the 1863rd, either.

「He was the 0th turn.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 0th turn.

His feet broke into a sprint. His feet that couldn't use either the [Red

Phoenix Shunpo]

nor [Ways of the Wind] yet.

There were plenty of targets present. A trembling college student hurdled on the floor; a middle-aged man hiding next to the disabled seating; an office worker, too absorbed in assaulting the others and not having enough time to look behind.

Yu Jung-Hyeok ran past all of them. And then…

「He selected the hardest opponent within this subway car as his target.」

"Euh-heuh…… heuh?"

Choi Han-Gyu smiled insidiously while observing the spanner flying in. He took an agile step back to evade, then an ultra-sharp survival knife jumped out from his waist.

Along with the 'Swish!' noise, Yu Jung-Hyeok dodged the blade with nary a gap to spare.

「Why did Yu Jung-Hyeok make this choice?」

I couldn't tell. Why did this guy, frightened out of his mind, make such a choice?

Choi Han-Gyu still carried several other tools, and not only that, he was in possession of a home-made explosive, as well. On the other hand, all Yu Jung-Hyeok had was a spanner as thick as a child's arm.

Even then, I wasn't worried.

Although I didn't know the finer details of the 0th turn, Yu Jung-Hyeok wouldn't die in this place. Not before he got to experience all these tragedies, and not before they led him to that vast cycle of

regressions, Yu Jung-Hyeok…… wouldn't get killed.

[Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's' attribute, 'Pro Gamer' is awakening!]

He was awakening his exclusive attribute, the one that I was quite familiar with. It was a skill that allowed him to digitise everything in this world like a video game and analyse them. A skill to control his body, as if he was moving his game avatar.

His spanner accurately struck Choi Han-Gyu's wrist. The bomber screamed out for a moment as the home-made explosive fell out from his grasp.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's spanner then accurately flew in towards the neck of flustered Choi Han-Gyu next. It was an unavoidable attack, a perfect counter that his talent had calculated.

Unfortunately, even he had failed to take into account this one thing.

[Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu' is investing 900 Coins to 'stamina'!]

And that was precisely the system of this new world.

"T-that, hurts."

Although a dark-red mark was left behind on Choi Han-Gyu's neck, it wasn't broken.

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His muscles swelled, and he grabbed Yu Jung-Hyeok by the neck. The latter's complexion paled greatly as he dangled up in the air. While grabbing hold of his victim's collars, Choi Han-Gyu's free hand picked up another hammer.

"D-die."

Right in that moment, Yu Jung-Hyeok saw the fallen 'home-made bomb' on the floor.

And I realised what he was thinking of.

Yu Jung-Hyeok throwing the spanner in his hand, and I making my move, happened simultaneously.

The time flow slowed down greatly.

The slowly-flying spanner was accurately heading towards the centre of the home-made bomb. I quietly stared at this spectacle.

Even if that thing went off, Yu Jung-Hyeok wouldn't die. That simply had to be, if what I read was correct. But, why was this?

…Why were my hands shaking so much like this?

'The 4th Wall.' After hearing the air making the 'Tsu-chuchut' noise, I continued on.

'Does Yu Jung-Hyeok's sponsor exist in this world?'

「He ex ists」

The 'Most Ancient Dream' existed in this world.

The being that became the 'Most Ancient Dream' much earlier than me – the younger version of myself. Or, something that was presumably my 'younger version'.

'If that's the case, why can't I sense anything?'

That's what's been bothering me.

I could sense everything in this world. Everything in the scenarios, including individual Incarnations all the way to the Constellations blanketing the heavens above.

However, I failed to sense just this one thing.

'Where is the Most Ancient Dream right now?'

[The 4th Wall] didn't answer me.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's spinning spanner flew in, and was about to reach the home-made explosive.

'Could it be…… '

「How did the 'Most Ancient Dream' manage to form a contract with the 0th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok?」

All those questions simmering away inside my head until now were going off all at once.

「The 'Most Ancient Dream' dreams through the 'Ways of Survival'.」

Indeed, the younger version of me imagined this world while reading the 'Ways of Survival'.

「And the 'Ways of Survival' was a story that started off from Yu Jung-Hyeok's 3rd regression turn.」

So, could he even properly imagine the Ways of Survival's 0th turn?

Was he even capable of picturing a story not mentioned in the original, a world that he hadn't read before?

「If that's the case, then just who was the 'Constellation Sponsor' that appeared during Yu Jung-Hyeok's 0th turn?」

The bomb exploded. The shower of debris flying out stabbed into Choi Han-Gyu's back, then into the bodies of people busy hacking away at each other. Accompanied by a loud screeching noise, the subway's ceiling was caving in. Several pieces of debris were flying straight towards Yu Jung-Hyeok's heart and neck.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[You're the owner of the 'Final Wall'.]

[Your 'Mastery' isn't sufficient enough to interfere with the world-line.]

[The world-line's Probability is resisting you!]

I ignored the Probability and caught the flying debris. Along with the vicious heat enveloping my hand, the debris scattered into ashes in my palm.

[A deux ex machina the world-line doesn't recognise is activating!]

[The world has sensed your interference!]

「Right at that moment, Yu Jung-Hyeok raised his head.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok crawled out from underneath the collapsed Choi Han-Gyu and stared at me.

「Although it was for the briefest of brief moments, Yu Jung-Hyeok felt that there was someone standing before him.」

"Who……?"

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Worth has concluded.]

[You have acquired the normal clear reward of 300 Coins.]

[100 Coins have been deducted as the channel usage fee.]

[Additional reward calculation has commenced.]

Along with the scenario calculations, the heads of the people began exploding. And as the deluge of blood rained down, I silently looked at Yu Jung-Hyeok on the floor.

Bihyung's excited voice coming from the distance, as well as [The 4th Wall]'s words of warning, could be heard next. Even the messages of Constellations suspecting the Probability streamed in, too.

In the meantime, Yu Jung-Hyeok was staring at the message spreading out before him with quaking eyes.

['Sponsor selection' is commencing!]

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- Please select your sponsor.

- The backer you choose will become your trusty sponsor.

1. God of Wine and Ecstasy

2. Mouse that Eats Fingernails

3. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon

+

[A new Constellation has entered the channel!]

[A new Constellation is participating in the 'sponsor selection'!]

+

4. Demon King of Salvation

+

Fin.

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[Currently, the applicable regression turn is under the 'Overwrite restriction'.]

[Currently, the applicable world-line's copyright holder is absent.]

[As the owner of the 'Final Wall', you can act as the substitute copyright holder.]

[Will you activate 'Overwrite' to interfere with the worldview?]

The warning messages floated up one after the other in the empty air. Almost at the same time, [The 4th Wall]'s voice entered my ears.

「Kim Dok Ja」

'…I know already, so stop trying to scare me.'

I could already tell what [The 4th Wall] was going to say. Probably, it'd be something along the line of there's no meaning in changing the predetermined past.

「……」

I sensed a certain glare squarely locking onto me from the empty air, but I tried my best to ignore that.

Although I had no clue how the original 0th turn unfolded, if the paragraph I read in passing inside [The 4th Wall]'s library was true, then… The 0th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok shouldn't select his backer until much later.

He would lose Yi Seol-Hwa and Yi Ji-Hye during this turn.

He'd lose the ones precious to him, those he barely managed to meet, and then…

…And then, he'd desperately think about this one thing as his death

approached him.

「'If only I had a sponsor, what could it have been like?'」

I stared at Yu Jung-Hyeok as he read the system messages with quaking eyes.

Through this turn, his cycle of regression would begin. He'd get to repeat countless regressions and thereby walk on the 'Hellscape of Eternity'.

「Ev en if y ou cha nge thi s turn…… 」

'The past that the Secretive Plotter lived through won't disappear. I know that.'

Even if I changed this world-line, the predetermined tragedies would still happen. The Yu Jung-Hyeok I know would live through the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and eventually, all the way to 1863rd regression turns. He'd become the 'Secretive Plotter', and start hating me.

However, even if that was the case…

'I can't pick up any traces of the 'Most Ancient Dream' that isn't me in this regression turn.'

It was quite likely that the cause of this event was the younger me not knowing anything about Yu Jung-Hyeok's 0th turn. Whatever the case might have been, one thing's for certain; at the very least, I could take on that role during this world-line.

I could become Yu Jung-Hyeok's sponsor during this world-line.

「Wi ll y ou ma ke him re gre ss?」

[The 4th Wall] asked as if it was intrigued. I shook my head.

'No. I'll make sure he doesn't.'

「Ev en if he's cha nged, the fu ture won't…… 」

'I know. That's why I feel even more relieved.'

The past I changed wouldn't deny the Yu Jung-Hyeok I know of.

「If Yu Jung-Hyeok got to experience a regression turn that wasn't tragic, even if it's just once… 」

I slowly extended my hand towards the air.

['Overwrite' has commenced!]

[Interfering with the applicable worldview has begun!]

[As your mastery over the dream is insufficient, currently it's impossible to interfere too aggressively.]

As the sparks exploded with a loud 'Tsu-chuchuchut!', messages popped up one after the other.

[The 'Demon King of Salvation' is registering his temporary Constellation name.]

[You're currently participating in the 'sponsor selection' as a Constellation.]

['s system is suspicious of your eligibility.]

[Low-grade Dokkaebi 'Bihyung' finds your Modifier unfamiliar.]

[Small number of Constellations are flustered by your sudden entrance!]

I bit down on my lip while observing Yu Jung-Hyeok's pale expression.

This might prove to be a bad decision. Yu Jung-Hyeok might end up even more miserable because I changed this world-line.

However, if it was the me of right now…

[Ho-oh-ra, the 'Demon King of Salvation'? Well now, a new Constellation-nim has decided to enter the stage!]

If it was Kim Dok-Ja the 'Most Ancient Dream' who had witnessed the end of one world and had the knowledge of the scenario's epilogues, then wouldn't it be possible to change the predetermined destiny?

[Looks like we might need to extend the time since the candidates have increased.]

Bihyung updated the message floating in mid-air.

[Sponsor selection time period has been extended by 5 minutes.]

The survivors in the near vicinity, having somehow lived through that ordeal, began opening their mouths one by one.

“……Just what is all this?"

"Sponsor selection, is it……”

I didn't find it weird since I had read the 'Ways of Survival' before, but still, I could guess how confused they must feel after facing a situation like this for the first time ever.

[Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is activating his attribute!]

In the midst of all this, only Yu Jung-Hyeok was regaining his cool. His calm eyes were proof of that.

…Well, I'm getting curious about what he's thinking here, so.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv.???', is activating!]

Although I felt a bit sorry about taking a peek inside the feeble 0th turn's head, I simply had to look this time. What if, in a one-in-a-million chance, he chose a different backer, then……

[You are the 'Most Ancient Dream'.]

[You can utilise 100 percent of your skill's abilities regardless of your understanding on the target!]

The inside of Yu Jung-Hyeok's head spread out like an anatomy chart.

「What about Mi-Ah? What happened to her?」

「I must rescue Mi-Ah.」

「In order to do that, I must get through this selection thing before my eyes first」

「Backer selection. Sounds like I must pick my sponsor.」

I grew slightly tense.

During the original 0th turn, this guy apparently didn't choose anyone as his backer this early on, but that'd always be nothing more than a story from the original. No one could tell what might happen this time.

Unexpectedly though, it wasn't Yu Jung-Hyeok displaying his interest in me, but other Constellations.

[Constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', is greeting you.]

[Constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', thinks your Modifier is a cool one.]

It seemed that Dionysus's outgoing personality was the same regardless of the regression turns. If he didn't yield to us back in the

Final Ark, the ensuing battle would've been so much harder.

Just as I was about to greet him back, someone else butted in.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is keeping his eyes on you.]

…Now that I thought about it, this dude was also here, wasn't he? Hey, you, aren't you supposed to be eyeing Kim Nam-Woon in the next subway car? Just how many bridges are you planning to straddle here?

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', thinks you are copying from his Modifier.]

I was about to ask just which part sounded the same to him, but in the end, held back.

Only three minutes remained; no need to waste my energy on something completely unnecessary.

I shifted my head to discover that Yu Jung-Hyeok had begun considering his choices earnestly.

I swallowed back my nervous saliva.

+

1. God of Wine and Ecstasy

+

Yu Jung-Hyeok stared at that Modifier for a little while before shifting his gaze away.

「Something feels messy about that name.」

Soon after, his eyes landed on the second candidate.

+

2. Mouse that Eats Fingernails

+

I grew nervous when he stared at that Modifier for quite a long time.

Wake up, Yu Jung-Hyeok. You'd be better off choosing the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon instead of this.

「Sounds weak.」

I barely managed to breathe a sigh of relief.

Damn it, man. Stop making people nervous.

Yu Jung-Hyeok then stared at the third candidate afterwards.

+

3. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon

+

Although obvious, Yu Jung-Hyeok would never choose the third option. He might seem drunk on his awesomeness outwardly, but in truth, he wasn't a fan of such flashy and grand-sounding words. That's why…

「That's a fairly strong-sounding name.」

…Wha? H-hang on a…

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「Maybe, it might be an unexpectedly powerful sponsor.」

It's true that he's powerful, but… That guy, he makes his Incarnations recite weird summoning spells, you know?

Hey, Jung-Hyeok-ah, please open your eyes properly and take a closer look. The only ones that can handle this guy are Kim Nam-Woon or Han Su-Yeong, that's it.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is boasting in your direction.]

[One minute remaining until the conclusion of the sponsor selection.]

And finally, Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes landed on the fourth candidate.

+

4. Demon King of Salvation

+

I barely managed to calm my mind and along with Yu Jung-Hyeok, looked at the backer selection list from behind him.

The God of Wine and Ecstasy, Mouse that Eats Fingernails, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, and the Demon King of Salvation…

'[The 4th Wall], what do you think?'

As if it didn't get the intention behind the question, [The 4th Wall] took its time answering back.

'What I'm asking you is, who sounds strongest to you?'

「Th at is…… 」

'Not including the actual combat prowess, just judging from the Modifiers alone.'

I thought that a reply should be forthcoming pretty quickly, but it seemed that [The 4th Wall] was actually in a dilemma here.

I didn't wait and spoke up first. 'Not saying this because I'm the 「Demon King of Salvation」, but in truth, and also, objectively speaking…… '

Hang on, no need to look at it objectively, either. Just think about it logically.

The God of Wine and Ecstasy? He simply sounded like a drunkard.

The Mouse that Eats Fingernails? You weren't looking for a nail clipper substitute, so what would you even need this guy for?

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon? Just one look, and you should know not to choose this guy.

Even if the 0th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok was an idiot, he should not be making such mistakes.

The only normal-sounding Modifier was mine. And for sure, he raised his finger and pointed at the fourth option as if he was impressed by my Modifier. Then, he began thinking.

「What an arrogant-sounding name.」

'…… '

「Weaklings often use names like this.」

Even before I could shout something out, Yu Jung-Hyeok shot up from his spot and spoke. "I've made up my mind. I will……”

As he formed a triumphant grin, his lips slowly parted.

I silently stared at the subway's ceiling. Accompanied by the 'Tsu-chuchuchut!' noise, vicious heat burned on my hand.

[You're interfering in the world-line.]

['Overwrite' has commenced.]

[Excessive interference might cause the world-line to strongly resist……]

I used all of my strength to smack the back of Yu Jung-Hyeok's head.

*

"Keo-heok!"

Kim Dok-Ja woke up from the powerful impact on the back of his head.

"How long are you planning to sleep? Wake up already!"

He opened his eyes and found Han Su-Yeong lightly dusting her hands. He then wiped away the drool marks on the couch and gingerly sat back up.

What's this? Why am I here? Okay, so…

"What are you doing? Hurry up and get ready already! Did you forget where we're supposed to go today?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok standing in his trademark pose was standing next to Han Su-Yeong, his eyes still blazing non-stop.

"You're making us wait for no reason," he said.

It wasn't just him, though; Jeong Hui-Won's head peeked out from behind Yu Jung-Hyeok, and the figure of Yi Hyeon-Seong carrying an armful of something could be seen behind her.

"Is that pizza?"

"It's fried chicken, you dummy."

Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong were swallowing their saliva as they continued to stare at Yi Hyeon-Seong's plastic bags. And finally, Yi Ji-Hye standing next to these two children, too.

"Hurry up and let's go! I'm starving!"

Kim Dok-Ja saw this spectacle and finally remembered what today was.

「This world's scenario had ended.」

When he turned his head, he saw warm rays of sunlight seeping through the [Industrial

Complex]'s windows.

「And today was 's first field trip.」

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As they made their ways towards their destination, Han Su-Yeong continued to grumble away.

"Hey, Kim Dok-Ja."

"What now?"

"You didn't really forget what day is today, right?"

"What day is it?"

"It's December 25th. What day do you think it was?"

Kim Dok-Ja pondered for a little bit before replying to her. "The day Mitra was born?"

"Is that supposed to be style humour?"'

They continued walking while exchanging banter like that. Every so often, Yu Jung-Hyeok let out a pained groan as if they were getting on his nerves.

It was around then that a red sports car came to a stop on the side of the road while making a loud noise.

"Sang-Ah-ssi!"

Jeong Hui-Won was first to recognise Yu Sang-Ah and quickly raised her hand. The latter, kitted out in a white long-padded coat and a pair of jeans, took off her sunglasses and replied back.

"I'm so sorry, the filming took longer than I thought."

Perhaps finding the current Yu Sang-Ah not to her liking, Han Su-Yeong verbally tackled her down right away.

"Oh, my? You sure are a full-fledged celeb nowadays, aren't you?"

"Do we really need to eat by the Han River when it's so cold outside?"

"Is there anyone here without cold resistance? I mean, you should still have that sort of a skill remaining, right?"

"We could've just eaten back in the Complex, though. As it's Christmas, there should be quite a few people by the river, too."

"We made a promise with the kids."

While watching the two of them bickering away, Kim Dok-Ja felt a certain corner of his heart ache for some reason.

Why did this sight feel so nostalgic to him?

It had already been three months since the scenarios came to an end, so……

"What about Seol-Hwa-ssi and Pil-Du-ssi? I can't see the department head Han, either."

"They'll be here. Ah, there they are! Oiii! Yi Seol-Hwa!"

Right in front of the Yeouinaru Station, Yi Seol-Hwa, wearing a white fur coat, was waving both of her hands with a bright smile. And next to her was Gong Pil-Du, staring in another direction with a

cantankerous expression.

"You didn't want to show up for so long that we thought you forgot about us again."

Perhaps she felt guilty after hearing that, Jeong Hui-Won quickly replied. "Eiii, there's no way that's true, though?"

"……But, you did abandon us and returned to the [Industrial Complex] first, didn't you?"

"Hmm, hmm. W-we did go back to find you later, didn't we?"

"What do you mean, find us?! We only were able to come back because the librarians let us leave! Seriously, if I look back to that time, I still……"

"What about Han Myeong-Oh?"

"Myeong-Oh-ssi didn't come, saying that he must spend Christmas with his family……"

"What family does that ahjussi even have?… Ah."

The companions continued to walk forward under the noisy, festive atmosphere.

Yi Gil-Yeong and Shin Yu-Seung clung onto each of Kim Dok-Ja's arms and growled towards one another.

"Hey, you. Stop pulling him to your side."

"You too."

"By the way ahjussi, you think Santa Claus is a Constellation, too?"

The group eventually reached the Han River public park. Maybe the cold weather was to blame, as there weren't all that many people

visible here. What was visible, though, were the collapsed bridges of the river, as well as the pitch-black night sky. Only an extremely few stars remained as proof of existing up there once before.

「Without a doubt, everything did come to an end.」

The group laid a mat on the ground, and installed a portable stove next to the children.

Yu Jung-Hyeok then placed a picnic table next to the stove and proceeded to make something with Yi Ji-Hye.

Kim Dok-Ja asked. "…… What's this, we're going to make them here?"

"Of course. There are no fried chicken takeaways or pizzeria remaining, so obviously we have to make our own, right?"

He thought about it and realised that's true. It'd been only three months since the end of the scenarios, so pizzerias or takeaways couldn't have been revived already.

Han Su-Yeong carried on. "Be grateful that we have someone who can make them for us."

Chicken drumsticks dismantled in an instant flew in the air, and Yu Jung-Hyeok's

special sauces danced enticingly just above them. Rolled dough spun vigorously at the end of the scabbard, too. It was uncertain whether he was making a pizza or fried chicken, but without a doubt, something amazing was being created right now.

"In the end, a day like today did come," said Yu Sang-Ah as she sat on the mat with her knees pulled up close. Her eyes were staring at the Han River, as if she was submerged in reminiscence.

Kim Dok-Ja addressed her. "You must be really busy nowadays."

"It's just… Yes, I am. There are lots of things to take care of, so…"

It had only been three months since the scenarios ended. The society at large hadn't regained its stability yet.

The system's influence hadn't completely disappeared yet, and the criminals retaining their skills or Stigmata continued with their crime sprees even now. Yu Sang-Ah was this world's hero that defeated them and protected ordinary citizens.

"They look so good together."

In a spot far away, Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Hyeon-Seong were standing together to look at the Han River.

Han Su-Yeong pouted and spat out her words. "I bet 100 Coins that they won't last a year."

It was right then, they heard something exploding in the distance. The startled companions instinctively reached towards their individual weapons.

But when they took a closer look, the explosion noise came from the fireworks fired from a distant building.

"……Someone's using stuff like that already?"

Han Su-Yeong muttered out in disbelief.

Kim Dok-Ja stared at that spectacle with renewed interest. Fireworks, was it? He never expected to see them again in his life. Bit by bit, the aroma of their food getting ready wafted in.

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"Kim Dok-Ja."

"Ng?"

"You know, you haven't been reading that thing recently."

"What do you mean?" Kim Dok-Ja thought about it for a second before making his reply. "Ah, that's right. I should be reading it, though."

He hurriedly switched his smartphone on. However, its battery was flat and the device refused to power on. Han Su-Yeong's figure was reflected on the dark screen; it was still impossible to get a bead on her inner thoughts through the look in her eyes. She wordlessly observed Kim Dok-Ja and muttered something to herself, before plopping down next to him with an 'Oopsie.'

"Maybe I shouldn't have bothered to come. All these useless thoughts are making my head hurt, instead."

"Ng?"

"Nah, just talking to myself. Never mind that, though – there was a part like this back in the 'Ways of Survival', wasn't it? You remember that?"

…The 'Ways of Survival'.

"You know, the third turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok…… everyone together, next to the Han River, chewing on the ground rat's legs……"

Kim Dok-Ja's expression as he listened to her words distorted in a strange, vague manner. She reached out to him as he began to wobble a little.

"Hey, what's the matter? You alright? You feeling sick somewhere?"

"It's just that my head hurts without warning……"

"Did I smack you a little too hard back then? How about resting for a bit……?"

"No, it's fine. Besides all that…… you're right."

"About what?"

"About the 'Ways of Survival'. I really like that scene, too. It's the scene I like the most from the third regression turn."

Han Su-Yeong deeply stared into Kim Dok-Ja's face, before forming a refreshing grin.

"Really now, you 'Ways of Survival' otaku freak."

Another round of fireworks went off in the distance, much larger in scale this time.

The children let out a loud cheer as they witnessed the beautiful flames engraving the night sky. Kim Dok-Ja began thinking; maybe this was the sight he'd been yearning to see for the longest time. For the longest…

Longest.

Han Su-Yeong opened her lips again. "By the way, Kim Dok-Ja?"

"Ng?"

Since from when was this? Her face was pushed real close to his. Her pristine, perfectly-set facial features, her pale-white cheeks, and a beauty spot just below her sparkling eyes.

Kim Dok-Ja became flustered by the faint hint of lemony scent reaching his nose. Just before he could say something, though, Han Su-Yeong approached him even closer. She brought her lips to his ear and slowly whispered in a clear voice.

"Such a scene doesn't appear in the third turn of 'Ways of Survival.'"

Along with the fireworks scattering in the sky, it felt as if a powerful shower of sparks were raining down from somewhere. Kim Dok-Ja thought that his vision was flipped around for some reason, only to realise that he was currently thrown onto the ground unceremoniously.

"Hey, you."

Han Su-Yeong's icy-cold venomous eyes were right before him now.

「Everything was definitely over, yet… 」

「Why did it feel like nothing was over somehow? 」

Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Hyeon-Seong running over here from the distance could be seen. Then, the expressionless face of Yu Jung-Hyeok; and finally, even the world where all the stories had concluded, too. Under the fireworks brightly dyeing the night sky, Han Su-Yeong's chilly, sharp dagger gleamed dangerously.

"You, just who the hell are you?"

Fin.

Han Su-Yeong continued to experience this weird feeling every single day for the last three months. It all started rather innocuously, though.

- Yu Jung-Hyeok, did you know?

- Know what?

- That guy, he enjoys his tomatoes now.

At first, she dismissed it as just a trivial little change. Scenarios were over now, so the dude must be changing bit by bit too, or so she thought.

- Hey, Kim Dok-Ja. Why are you so absent-minded lately?

- Uh? Uhm……

- By the way, are you sure that the scenarios are really over? Why isn't the system gone? You can still use your skills, right?

- Mm… It might take a little while longer for everything to go away.

The scenarios were over, but the world didn't immediately revert back to normal. As if, there was a story that hadn't ended yet. The proof of that was how people still could use their skills or Stigmata.

- To be more specific, you can't say that everything is over until we find the 'original author' of that novel first.

Han Su-Yeong agreed with Yu Jung-Hyeok's opinion. It was possible that this world existed because the 'Most Ancient Dream' read the 'Ways of Survival' in the first place.

Before all that, though, was the author who penned the novel in question. Meaning, this story would end only after they found that creature first.

- Just who is tls123? We came up with a few guesses so far, but they were all wrong, right? The most plausible candidate, 'Most Ancient Dream', didn't look like the author either, and…… hey, Kim Dok-Ja.

What do you think?

The one with the highest likelihood of solving this quandary was Kim Dok-Ja, the reader that managed to read through all 3149 chapters of 'Ways of Survival.'

However, his reply was this.

- Uh… I wonder. Well, I kinda wonder if that's really important, now that we've come this far……

Other people could say that, fine. However, he was none other than Kim Dok-Ja, the sole reader who read the entirety of 'Ways of Survival' till its end.

He was Kim Dok-Ja, the greatest reader Han Su-Yeong ever knew.

"Speak. Who the hell are you?"

That's why Han Su-Yeong began wondering.

「If Kim Dok-Ja before my eyes is a fake, then… 」

"Su-Yeong-ssi! What are you…!"

Just as the voice of Yi Hyeon-Seong rushing in reached here, Shin Yu-Seung grabbed onto Han Su-Yeong's wrist.

"What do you think you're doing??"

"Noona!"

It was the same for Yi Gil-Yeong, as well. The boy awkwardly blocked her front and looked up at her with nervous eyes. The atmosphere of the companions changed drastically once they discovered her sharp dagger.

"Eonni, can you explain yourself?"

Yi Ji-Hye had put down the kitchen knife and before anyone noticed it, was standing next to Han Su-Yeong while gripping her Twin Dragon Sword.

Yi Seol-Hwa was completely taken aback, while Jeong Hui-Won's eyes were narrowed to slits. And Yu Sang-Ah, calmly observing the unfolding situation unlike the others, was seen next.

Han Su-Yeong thought about something for a little while, then let go of Kim Dok-Ja's collars while spitting out a long sigh. He plopped down powerlessly and looked up at her like a guilty man.

"This guy isn't Kim Dok-Ja. I'm not talking about anyone else but Kim Dok-Ja here. No way he can't remember that thing."

"What are you talking about?"

"The 'Ways of Survival.'"

After hearing that, the companions all simultaneously looked at Kim Dok-Ja's face – at Kim Dok-Ja, who used to talk non-stop about the 'Ways of Survival' every day.

As if she was a lecturer trying to explain a migraine-inducing problem, Han Su-Yeong held her head and began laying out her case in a calm, logical manner. And even decided to add this at the end, too.

"What I said just now wasn't from the 'Ways of Survival', but something from my own novel. There aren't any scenes of the companions enjoying their meal by the Han River in the 'Ways of Survival', you see."

"How do you know that, eonni? Did you actually read that novel, too?"

"Just the early parts. At least, I know for sure that no such scenes appear during the third regression turn."

That prompted Jeong Hui-Won to retort. "Isn't it possible to be mistaken about something like that? From the get-go, remembering every event happening in such a huge novel is……"

"It is possible if it's Kim Dok-Ja. Did you all forget how we managed to wrangle our way through the scenarios? And you really think that Kim Dok-Ja can't remember?"

Han Su-Yeong turned towards Kim Dok-Ja and growled menacingly. "Hey, you. Tell me how many times Yu Jung-Hyeok killed Asmodeus."

Her question simply caused Kim Dok-Ja to dazedly look up at her face. She scowled deeply, but just before she could go on another tirade, his lips opened first.

"Han Su-Yeong."

His voice sounded flat, monotonous. For a moment there, a certain expectation of

'maybe… ' flashed past by Han Su-Yeong's eyes. And then…

"My bad, but I really can't remember. I haven't been reading the 'Ways of Survival'

lately, so……"

"Look, look! This punk, he's not Kim Dok-Ja…!"

"Ahjussi."

The one to step in front of the dagger-brandishing Han Su-Yeong was Shin Yu-Seung.

As if she was trying to mould a clay pot, she held Kim Dok-Ja's hand with both of hers and asked him. "Do you remember what I wanted to eat by the Han River?"

The hands of Yu Jung-Hyeok standing not too far away and silently preparing the food came to a halt; the food wasn't finished yet.

Kim Dok-Ja replied immediately. "It's pizza and Cola."

"Hyung! Me! What about me?"

"Gil-Yeong-ee? You wanted to eat chicken by the sea. My bad. We'll

definitely go to the seaside next time, okay?"

Yi Gil-Yeong's and Shin Yu-Seung's tearful eyes were now glaring at Han Su-Yeong.

She frowned deeply. "Hold up. Your questions are too easy. With only that, you can't……"

That prompted Jeong Hui-Won to step forward this time. "Dok-Ja-ssi. What's the name of my sword?"

"The Judge's Sword. I struggled so hard to get all the materials for it, too."

"Dok-Ja-ssi, do you remember the very first item you gave me?"

"It was an aged iron shield, wasn't it?"

The companions then began their barrage of questions as if it was a competition. Even Gong Pil-Du got in on the act, too.

"Oii, do you remember the penalty fee you paid me during the Chungmuro scenario?"

"But, I didn't pay anything?"

"You son of a bitch. You better cough up or…!"

"Ahjussi, you told me this before, right? Ji-Hye-ya~, to be honest, I think you're the prettiest among all the Kim-Com members."

"I never said that."

Yi Ji-Hye muttered "Dang it," under her breath.

"……He's Dok-Ja ahjussi, alright."

There was this vague sense of relief blooming on the expressions of

the group.

Kim Dok-Ja observing this situation spoke up. "I don't know what's suddenly gotten into you, but I'm definitely Kim Dok-Ja. And Han Su-Yeong, why are you……"

"Hey, do you even remember how many regression turns there are in the 'Ways of Survival'?"

"Su-Yeong-ah." Jeong Hui-Won couldn't let this go on any longer and stepped forward.

"I don't know why you're acting like this, but we're on a rare outing together, so please do it in moderation."

"That's right, Su-Yeong-ssi. There must've been some kind of a misunderstanding……"

"……Misunderstanding??" Han Su-Yeong's hand gripping the dagger trembled ever so slightly. "Hey, Yu Jung-Hyeok!! Don't you have anything to say?!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok chopping up veggies in silence heard her call and shifted his disinterested eyes towards Han Su-Yeong. Then, he shifted his gaze over to Kim DokJa, before glancing at the rest of the companions. Finally, he turned his attention back

to the cutting board.

After observing that chain of events, Han Su-Yeong's shoulders began trembling nonstop. "Y-you, really……"

Her head dropped, and that's how she spotted a can of beer rolling on the floor. She picked it up and popped the lid open, then drank it all in one go. She wiped her lips in anger and spoke up.

"Screw it…… Fine, sure. I'm the lone weirdo among you, is that how it

is?"

Maybe that one can wasn't enough, she proceeded to pop the lid on another one.

"Fine. I know it's been difficult for everyone, trying to break past the scenarios. I know full well that you're too tired to think, and now you just wanna kick back and relax.

You think I don't wanna do that, too? I also wanna take it easy."

Along with the 'Puh-shushuk!' noise, beer foams bubbled up vigorously.

"But then, you idiots, you really think this Kim Dok-Ja is the real deal?"

"Han Su-Yeong."

"Shut up. Don't call me by my name."

Her cheeks were getting somewhat flushed now. Meanwhile, the Fable of [Predictive Plagiarism] was creaking into gear inside her head.

「It's possible that the companions are right. She's wrong, and it's totally possible that this Kim Dok-Ja is the real thing.」

Han Su-Yeong knew – just because he failed to remember a couple of scenes from the

'Ways of Survival', could she really use that to argue this Kim Dok-Ja wasn't really Kim Dok-Ja?

The current her acted too hastily. She failed to be logical.

Even then, Han Su-Yeong couldn't stop her emotions. Even as she herself failed to understand the reason behind her own strong reaction, she continued to mutter on.

"The 'Kim Dok-Ja' I remember is……”

…He was a man who could patiently read a boring novel filled with a ton of exposition that lasted well over three thousand chapters.

「"In the future when all the scenarios have ended, I may want to get back to writing novels again. When that happens, read my novel, okay?"」

A man who loved stories more than anyone in this whole world.

「"Fine, fine. I'll definitely read it."」

"But, it might be over three thousand chapters?"

"That's probably right up my alley, then."

"It might be boring, too."

"It's you writing it, so that's not possible, you know."

Such Kim Dok-Ja might forget about other things, but no way he'd forget about the

'Ways of Survival'.

Was this the fault of the alcohol? It felt as if the heat was gradually spreading even more inside her head.

「If this 'Kim Dok-Ja' is a fake, what does that signify?」

A trickery of the original author tls123? Or…

"Han Su-Yeong, why don't we stop there, and……”

A certain hypothesis popped up in her head as she looked at the expressions of her companions.

If what the Dokkaebi King said was the truth, then this world was nothing more than the delusion of the 'Most Ancient Dream'. Meaning, this world existed because 'he'

continued to dream. But now, the 'Most Ancient Dream' was no more; he disappeared along with the 'Secretive Plotter,' as well as the characters from the 999th turn.

「In that case, how can this world continue to exist?」

This was a truly horrifying hunch. One that should never become reality. And perhaps, a hunch that had already become their reality.

The beer can in her hand fell and rolled around on the ground. Half-consumed liquor spilt out among the other similar-styled cans also rolling around on the floor. She stared at her can, now almost empty, and muttered out in a trance-like state.

"What if… this 'Kim Dok-Ja' is an 'Avatar'……"

"Su-Yeong-ssi! What's suddenly gotten into you, saying stuff like……!"

"You think I'm doing this for fun?!"

Her serious voice caused the expressions on several companions to change. Those that turned back all carried similar kind of looks on their faces now.

Han Su-Yeong.

The only Incarnation among the group that possessed both the [Predictive Plagiarism]

as well as [Avatar] skills. It was her who took on the role of the Nebula's brain whenever Kim Dok-Ja wasn't around.

And her judgement was rarely, if ever, wrong.

Yi Hyeon-Seong slowly turned his head to stare at Kim Dok-Ja. Next up was Jeong Hui-Won, followed by Yi Ji-Hye. One by one, all the gazes were focusing on him now.

「What if Han Su-Yeong's words are correct…… 」

A faint crack was spreading within their minds, an opening created by

a very minute suspicion.

It was enough of an opening for Han Su-Yeong, though. "Whether he's really an 'Avatar'

or not, there is a simple way to find out."

By the time Jeong Hui-Won felt the ominous foreboding, Han Su-Yeong was already gone from her spot.

"Han Su-Yeong!"

Yi Ji-Hye unsheathed her sword as fast as a bolt of lightning and rushed forward, but by then, Han Su-Yeong was already only a few steps away from Kim Dok-Ja. As the incredulous torrent of winds stormed in, Shin Yu-Seung let out an explosion of Dragon Howling; Yi Gil-Yeong's insects were wrapping around Han Su-Yeong's ankles like chains, while Yi Hyeon-Seong dashed in to cover Kim Dok-Ja's figure.

Even then, Han Su-Yeong didn't stop.

"The dude who'll get to read my novel……”

Strings flying out from Yu Sang-Ah's hand restrained Han Su-Yeong's waist, and Jeong Hui-Won belatedly making her move managed to grab hold of her target's back. But, even as all these events were going down simultaneously, Han Su-Yeong's dagger had already left her hand.

“……isn't you."

Splat!

The sound of something splitting up resounded out next.

Fin.

Han Su-Yeong's dagger accurately brushed past Kim Dok-Ja's shoulder. He reflexively grasped his wound. Of course, she didn't miss that.

「An Avatar doesn't bleed.」

After the had weakened, even Constellations began to bleed real blood rather than Fables once they were wounded. So, if that Kim Dok-Ja was the real deal, then he should start bleeding right about now.

"Have you really gone insane?! What the hell are you doing?!"

"Ahjussi!"

Shin Yu-Seung freaking out hurriedly approached Kim Dok-Ja. Even Yi Hyeon-Seong and Yi Ji-Hye, too. And, the shoulder covered up by the wobbling Kim Dok-Ja……

「If what Han Su-Yeong said was correct, then.」

Very slowly, his palm left the wounded shoulder.

"I'm alright. Please don't worry."

No one knew who sucked in their breaths first. Nevertheless, they all clearly saw it.

「Blood was flowing. A deeply crimson blood, no less.」

Han Su-Yeong too also witnessed it. However……

"……Hold up. It's not over yet! There are Avatars that can bleed, too!"

What she said was true, because she too had created such an [Avatar] before.

「An Avatar injected with lots of memories will bleed.」

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She spotted Yu Jung-Hyeok in the distance, still chopping his veggies. She felt utterly annoyed by how his lips didn't even bob once as if he couldn't see what's happening on this side.

Perhaps that was why she ended up saying something she shouldn't have. "We'll know once we cut off his head. An Avatar will still move without a head, after all."

"What did you just say???"

Only after she saw Jeong Hui-Won's expression hardening to a frightening degree did she realise her own mistake. The aura of [Hellfire] danced on the [Judge's Sword]. That was Uriel's Stigma, never been activated once ever since the scenarios came to an end.

Jeong Hui-Won spoke in an angry voice. "If you try something like that, it'll be your head flying off, instead."

Han Su-Yeong stared at the [Judge's Sword] pointing at her and slowly raised the aura of the [Black Flame] as well. She knew the situation was gradually reaching the point of no return, yet she still couldn't stop herself.

Yi Seol-Hwa's voice trying to dissuade them was heard next. And when Han Su-Yeong saw the expressions of both Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong busy baring their animosity towards her, something inside

her snapped.

「Maybe, it was a miracle for them to come this far together.」

She was acutely aware of her not fitting in with these people. She used to be the 'king of prophets' once upon a time, and was referred to as the 'false king', too. She was nothing more than a villain in the epic tale Kim Dok-Ja had created.

Eating pizza and drinking Cola with everyone by the Han River? From the get-go, all of that was a conclusion ill-suited to Han Su-Yeong.

Ku-gugugugu!

The tense stand-off generated by the two opposing flames continued on, only for a clear, innocent-sounding voice to break the flow.

"What are you all doing? I brought beer." Jang Ha-Yeong holding plastic bags on both of her hands was standing there. "Wait, are you doing one of those hidden camera

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things because I showed up late?"

That voice filled with anxiety managed to wake the companions up. As if they finally recalled the reason why they were here in the first place.

And the man who hadn't said a single word until now also decided to say something as well. "Why don't you all give it a rest?"

The Status of a Transcender scattered brilliantly from the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] stabbed into the cutting board. And the murderous aura dominating over the park washed away in an instant.

"It's dinner time."

The delicious aroma wafting in stimulated everyone's hunger, instead.

Seven pizzas plus fried chicken were perfectly set up on top of the plates.

Yi Ji-Hye sighed after witnessing that spectacle. "Master is seriously……”

The rest of the group saw the uber-serious look in Yu Jung-Hyeok's face and exchanged glances with each other, not knowing how to respond.

Jang Ha-Yeong was the first one to dash towards the food, however. "What are you all doing? Aren't you gonna come?"

Gong Pil-Du chuckled helplessly after seeing that.

The atmosphere relaxed just a little, prompting Kim Dok-Ja to say something. "I'm fine.

I also get why Su-Yeong-ee is getting suspicious, too. Honestly speaking, I know I've become strangely forgetful recently. It often feels like important parts of my memories have disappeared wholesale……”

"Dok-Ja-ssi, this isn't something you can gloss over like tha……!"

"Let's eat first and discuss it later. I mean, it's not every day we get Yu Jung-Hyeok to cook for someone, after all."

Jeong Hui-Won frowned, but spat out a sigh nonetheless. The companions found their spots on the mat and settled down one by one. However, one person wasn't here.

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In the end, Jeong Hui-Won exploded in anger. "Really, this is……”

Han Su-Yeong couldn't be seen anywhere.

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The faint sounds of fireworks going off came from the distance. Han Su-Yeong stared at the cold water rushing out of the tap inside the bathroom and bit down hard on her lip.

'I made a mistake.'

It wasn't like her. She couldn't figure out why she got agitated to such a degree. A thought of calming herself down and returning to explain popped up in her head, but she just didn't know from where she should start her explanation to make them accept it.

「From the get-go, was it appropriate to call an Avatar that shared the memories a

'fake'?」

The sound of vibration came from her pocket.

- Su-Yeong-ssi.

It was a message from Yu Sang-Ah. Han Su-Yeong pocketed the phone again. But the device vibrated once more.

- Han Su-Yeot ○.

"Gimme a break."

- ㅎㅎ That's a typo.

Just as she was about to send a reply, she sensed a presence behind her.

"Please stop sulking and let's go back."

Long, pale fingers held and gripped her shoulder tightly. Han Su-Yeong slapped that hand away and looked behind her. "Forget it. I'll only sour the mood by showing up, anyway."

"That's not true. Everyone will understand."

"I said, forget……"

"Do you want me to respond like this, then?"

Yu Sang-Ah's gaze slowly transformed. Han Su-Yeong frowned deeply.

Through the open doorway, she could see the figures of the companions in the distance. And as she watched how Yu Sang-Ah stood there as if to protect that scene, a strange gut feeling suddenly brushed past her brain.

"You……"

Yu Sang-Ah's expression back then, not even trying all that hard to stop her. Maybe, she……

"Once upon a time, Dok-Ja-ssi asked me this. If the cause of this world was the 'Most Ancient Dream', then what would happen to the world if that guy was eliminated?" Yu Sang-Ah asked.

"What?"

"What will happen to a world that no one looks at?"

Han Su-Yeong grabbed Yu Sang-Ah's collars and shoved her against the wall.

"You… Spit out everything you know, now."

Han Su-Yeong looked into the still-calm eyes of Yu Sang-Ah and the truth gradually dawned on her.

「There was a time when Yu Sang-Ah acted as a librarian of the [The 4th Wall].」

She was the only one among the companions to actually enter inside Kim Dok-Ja. What exactly did she see inside that library filled with countless books?

"Spit it out! You saw something in there! That idiot, just what was he thinking about?!"

"……"

"Why didn't you try to stop me? Why, when the situation was getting……!"

"Because, I don't have the right to do so."

For the first time ever, Han Su-Yeong's mouth was shut tight after she heard Yu Sang-Ah's reply.

"……Protecting the world by dividing himself in half. One becomes the 'reader'

watching over the world, while the other becomes its 'character'."

Han Su-Yeong also knew.

She knew that maybe, that 'Kim Dok-Ja' bled because of that very reason.

She knew that, on that day when everyone was freed from the scenario, maybe the other side of Kim Dok-Ja was still riding on the subway – on that day, when she looked back, and Yu Jung-Hyeok also looked back. Maybe, Kim Dok-Ja remaining inside the train was still watching them.

"If that was the choice of a man who knew this world better than anyone, then……"

"How can you even say that?"

The pair of trembling hands were tightening around Yu Sang-Ah's collars even further.

But she lightly raised her own hand and grabbed hold of those shaking hands belonging to her captor.

"This is the choice of a person called myself."

"You, Kim Dok-Ja, you're all the same."

"Su-Yeong-ah. Do you really believe that other companions don't know what's going on?"

Han Su-Yeong felt like she got punched in the head.

"Dok-Ja-ssi who doesn't talk about the Ways of Survival anymore… Do you really think others don't find that strange? Really?"

"I-in that case……”

"Most of the memories we share together, 'Kim Dok-Ja-ssi' over there has it."

The companions sitting on the mat and chatting away could be seen. Figures of Jeong Hui-Won smiling brightly, while Yi Hyeon-Seong was pouring beer; drunk Gong Pil-Du was singing, while Yi Seol-Hwa was clapping her hands. Jang Ha-Yeong stood up from her spot and noisily yapped on with an exaggerated voice.

- So, like, back in the Demon World…

The 'Kim Dok-Ja' they remembered was different from people to people.

If Kim Dok-Ja was a 'reader' to Han Su-Yeong, then to Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong, he was the 'parent'. To Yi Hyeon-Seong, he was the 'spent cartridge', and to Yu Sang-Ah, the 'work colleague'. To Yi Ji-Hye, Jeong Hui-Won, Jang Ha-Yeong, and also to Yi Seol-Hwa as well as Gong Pil-Du…

"That person is also Dok-Ja-ssi. Doesn't matter how much percentage he is made out of, there's no doubt that he is Dok-Ja-ssi. Dok-Ja-ssi who journeyed together with us."

The festive fireworks were still going off in the distance. The children's eyes sparkled under the light. It felt as if the history they had to live through was fading away. Han Su-Yeong dazedly stared at that view,

at the smiling face of Kim Dok-Ja among the companions.

Without a doubt, that was the scene he had been wishing for.

「This was where the story of came to an end.」

Yu Sang-Ah was right.

Kim Dok-Ja made his choice, and the companions chose to accept his decision. They had been hurt far too many times, and none of them wanted to be hurt anymore.

And so, this was their conclusion.

Yu Sang-Ah asked her. "Is there any meaning in deciphering which one is really him?"

Just like how there was no meaning in assigning the tag of 'real one' among the Yu Jung-Hyeoks from countless regression turns, there was also no meaning in finding out which of the equally divided Kim Dok-Jas was the real him.

Han Su-Yeong replied while letting go of Yu Sang-Ah's collars. "I'm not trying to find out which one's the real deal."

Yu Sang-Ah's eyes were trembling. And Han Su-Yeong's face was reflected on those trembling irises. Then, as she was left stunned by the revelation that she too could make such an expression, as well as getting agitated by the fact that she could even say something like this, she finished what she wanted to say.

"No, what's important is that Kim Dok-Ja is still stuck in that place."

Maybe, there might not be anyone needing that version of 'Kim Dok-Ja'. You might not find anyone out there wanting to be with that crazy loon who only loved the 'Ways of Survival'. However, at least just one person…

- Ahjussi!

It was around then that an urgent voice suddenly resounded out in the distance. There was a commotion rising up from the mat where the companions were currently sitting together. And also, a chilling scent of blood wafted in from somewhere.

Yu Sang-Ah and Han Su-Yeong realised something had gone wrong and by the time they arrived there, Shin Yu-Seung was sobbing away, her hands soaked in blood.

"The, the bleeding, it doesn't want to stop."

Kim Dok-Ja, seemingly fine only until a second ago, lost consciousness and had collapsed.

Han Su-Yeong's hand holding the dagger trembled ever so faintly. Could it be…

"It's not because of the wound from earlier. This……”

Yi Seol-Hwa felt for Kim Dok-Ja's pulse, then her face hardened immediately. His body was shaking ominously; blood trickling out from his shoulder dyed the gauze crimson in the blink of an eye.

And right next second, the blood soaking the gauze began evaporating.

Pah-sususu……

The droplets of blood crumbled away, like how Fables would disappear. Yi Seol-Hwa cried out.

"Take him back to the Complex! Hurry!"

Fin.

It had been a week since Kim Dok-Ja lost his consciousness.

The companions took turns to nurse him as he remained in a coma. Yi Seol-Hwa and Aileen continued to administer medical treatment in alternating turns, and many Incarnations blessed with famed healing skills also paid visit, as well.

Unfortunately, none of them could discover the reason why Kim Dok-Ja suddenly ended up in this state.

- His internal structure is becoming unstable. We don't know the reason yet. Maybe, it's related to the 's weakening, somehow…

A few Incarnations cautiously discussed the topic related to the [Avatar].

"Ahjussi."

Kim Dok-Ja remained unconscious, and while staring at him, Shin Yu-Seung murmured as if to steel herself.

This person, he's Kim Dok-Ja. Without a doubt, he is the Kim Dok-Ja that I remember.

However, there was one thing that didn't change no matter how many times she told herself that.

「The power of her 'Constellation sponsor' cannot be felt from this existence before her eyes.」

The Fable that warmly embraced her couldn't be felt all that well right now.

[Fable, 'Saviour of the Star', is stuttering during its storytelling.]

Even the Fables that connected her to Kim Dok-Ja were hesitating with their storytelling. As if, this existence before her wasn't suitable as the subject of their story.

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Shin Yu-Seung slowly closed her eyes.

[Currently, the connection to your Constellation sponsor is very faint.]

[Currently, the communication channel to your Constellation sponsor is disconnected.]

The 'sponsor contract' that tied her to Kim Dok-Ja was still in effect. There it was, the starlight within the night sky, remaining in the exact same spot and watching her as always.

「If that's the case, then just whose starlight was that?」

Shin Yu-Seung stared at Kim Dok-Ja's shoulder that still hadn't healed yet.

This arm always protected his companions. With that arm, he painted his world. With that arm, he ended the scenarios, and brought down the Final Wall. She slowly raised her head and looked at Kim Dok-Ja's face. The golden headband put on top of his head during the Journey to the West scenario still remained where it should. The constrictive headband lost its powers after the Great Sage's Fable weakened. Shin Yu-Seung reached out and brushed his dishevelled hair underneath the headband.

「"Don't worry, Yu-Seung-ah."」

Kim Dok-Ja kept his promise.

「The PC Bang she wanted to go together.」

「Pizzas and Cola she wanted to enjoy by the Han River.」

Inside those fantasy-like moments, Kim Dok-Ja was definitely there. They were gentle, tender moments that a person sacrificed all of his life to bring to reality.

She didn't want to deny this conclusion that they only managed to reach through such a long, arduous journey.

Shin Yu-Seung buried her face on the bed and sobbed, until the fatigue sent her into dreamland. Someone opened the quiet hospital room's door and entered inside.

"Hey, it's time to cha……”

Yi Gil-Yeong entering the room discovered the sleeping figure of Shin Yu-Seung and promptly shut his mouth. He lightly dusted the thin blanket next to the chair and covered her shoulders with it. Then, he settled down on the other side of the bed.

"Dok-Ja hyung."

He carefully tucked Kim Dok-Ja's hand that slipped outside the bed under the duvet. It was a hand full of scars. It was also the same hand that gave a certain boy his grasshopper once upon a time.

「There was a time when Kim Dok-Ja was like a god to the boy.」

Yi Gil-Yeong stared at Kim Dok-Ja for a long, long time before softly muttering out.

"……Hyung, you're still you, right?"

He sighed deeply and slowly stood up to open up the room's curtains.

There were truly many people walking on the streets outside. People that Kim Dok-Ja had saved. This was the world that he had protected. Yi Gil-Yeong sat near the window and silently counted the number of passersby for a long while.

*

"……That stupid idiot. If you were going to make an Avatar, you should've done it properly."

The grumbling Han Su-Yeong was walking inside the Industrial Complex.

It had been one whole week since Kim Dok-Ja had collapsed. She had come to a conclusion in the meantime.

「I can't expect any help from the companions.」

Yu Sang-Ah was right – this 'Kim Dok-Ja', and the 'Kim Dok-Ja' she missed, were both Kim Dok-Ja. Meaning, this was the true ending he had been wishing for, and everything would be fine if the companions decided to accept it.

However, it was possible for at least one person to have a differing opinion about it.

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"Hey, shorty."

"What is it, Black Flame Dragon ahjumma?"

"Where is your oppa right now?"

"Don't feel like telling you, though?"

"You little!"

Yu Mi-Ah quickly ran away and hid between the narrow alleyways. She was so unbelievably fast that by the time Han Su-Yeong got there, that little kid was already long gone without a trace. However, Yu Jung-Hyeok must've been nearby considering his little sister was around here.

And so, how long did she continue to walk afterwards? An unfamiliar noticeboard appeared before her eyes.

[Kaixenix District]

A residential area set up on the western sections of the Complex was here. The antique architectural style reminded her of the medieval fantasy setting. She only heard about this place from Yi Su-Gyeong, but now that she had witnessed the view of this rather unexpectedly well-thought-out cityscape, Han Su-Yeong couldn't help but be impressed.

Just as she began thinking that it'd not be so bad to sightsee since she was searching for that fool anyway…

"Su-Yeong-ah!"

An unexpected person found her first.

“……Yuri?"

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"You've been living here?"

"For a while now. I know you've been busy, but still, I'm a little sad that you only came to visit today."

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“……You totally sound like a Korean, you know that?"

Han Su-Yeong was really glad to see Yuri sipping tea before her eyes like this.

Yuri di Aristel.

Back in the Kaixenix Archipelago, Han Su-Yeong took possession of this woman and carried out the scenario. Now that she looked back, so many things happened back in Kaixenix. She wasted decades waiting for that stinking Kim Dok-Ja, for instance. And…

"By the way, who were you trying to find here? Was it me, perhaps?"

"I'm sorry. It's not, but……”

"Tch. In that case?"

Han Su-Yeong briefly explained her situation, and Yuri clapped her hands if she understood.

"Ah, you meant your fiance ?"

"My fiance ?"

Han Su-Yeong thought about something for a bit, before her expression crumpled. Now that she looked back some more, didn't she almost get married to that guy?

Yuri asked in a teasing tone. "By the way, which one do you really prefer? My personal preference is the shorter……”

"Never mind that. You know where Yu Jung-Hyeok is right now?"

"Mm? Is that your preference?"

"Please just answer the question."

"If it's that idiot……”

…That idiot?

"Well, what good timing. There he is."

A huge shadow ran past the cafe's window with a whoosh. Han Su-Yeong hurriedly shot up and rushed outside the cafe.

"Hey, what about the bill?!"

"Sorry! I'll get it next time!"

She spotted the figure running up ahead. It was Yu Jung-Hyeok kitted out in a tracksuit, currently running through the Industrial Complex while maintaining a constant speed. She heard the Complex's residents murmuring to each other nearby.

“…He's running again, that guy."

"Why does he stupidly keep doing that, when you can just use your skills?"

"It's already been three months."

This was her first time hearing that. Han Su-Yeong gave chase, and studied Yu Jung-Hyeok's back while doing so. It was as the residents said; he was moving with his own muscles without using any skills whatsoever.

She lightly sucked in her breath, activated her skill, and reached next to Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"What are you doing?"

The running man soaked from head to toe in sweat glanced at her before returning his gaze back to the road.

"Are you going to enter a marathon or something? But then again, even you would need to find a job in this new world, so……”

Her provocation failed to elicit a reply from Yu Jung-Hyeok. Just as she began wondering what to say next to get a response from this stubborn fool, people they brushed by could be heard muttering to themselves.

“……Look at that, another idiot showed up."

These morons, seriously now……!

Just as Han Su-Yeong was about to give them a piece of her mind, Yu Jung-Hyeok

opened his mouth first.

"I'm running, because I want to."

"Why? You feeling frustrated too?"

He didn't reply. Instead, a very faint shadow was cast over his expression. She couldn't fully understand the meaning behind his current expression, but it still felt like she could get it just a little.

"How much of that novel did you say you've read?"

Han Su-Yeong ended up replying in a weirded-out voice from that unexpected question. She didn't think Yu Jung-Hyeok would ever ask her about that. "Just a bit in the beginning part."

"What kind of a person was I originally in that world? For instance, during the 0th turn or the first turn……"

"What rubbish are you on about? Why are you asking me that, anyway?"

"For some reason, I can't seem to remember the past all that well."

That was the first time she heard this.

"You can't remember?"

"No, it's not that I can't, but they are completely fragmented."

"You've regressed for over a thousand times so, yeah, even I would end up like that."

Although she spoke in jest, Han Su-Yeong got an idea as to why Yu Jung-Hyeok's memories were so unclear.

Technically speaking, Yu Jung-Hyeok was the protagonist of a novel called 'Ways of Survival'. Every bit of info related to him came from the author's setting, and those not told by said author were basically 'things that don't exist'.

The novel 'Ways of Survival' began from Yu Jung-Hyeok's 3rd regression turn. So maybe, he shouldn't be fully recalling anything that happened between his 0th and the

2nd regression turn.

"Is that really important? What you were like back then?"

Whether this was an issue of the setting, or he really did forget…… Regardless of what, the past was past. That might sound like a rather obvious thing to say, but she still wanted to tell him – that the truly important thing wasn't the past but the future about to take place.

However, Yu Jung-Hyeok replied like this first. "It is important to me."

He continued to maintain a constant breathing pattern; Han Su-Yeong watched him force his body to its limits without the help of any of his skills and got this feeling that she finally gained clarity on something.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok is someone who can clear the 'scenario' the best in this world.」

Paradoxically, the Conquering King who could clear the scenarios far better than anyone lost his usefulness after the scenarios ended.

So, in this world where the scenarios were over, just what had become of Yu Jung-Hyeok?

Han Su-Yeong's lips bobbed up and down several times.

"You probably were Yu Jung-Hyeok even then. Yu Jung-Hyeok who'd become the regressor."

This was all she could do, returning what he said in the past back to him in full. And in order to change the topic, she quickly followed that up with something else.

"Besides that, I have something to say to you. Maybe you know this already, but this world-line's Kim Dok-Ja is…"

"He's an Avatar. I already know."

So, he did know. Han Su-Yeong was about to make a retort, but clamped her mouth shut, instead.

Getting this far wasn't the issue. No, now that she was here, her lips didn't want to part

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all that easily at all.

Was it okay to suggest to this 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' that they should go and rescue Kim DokJa, the one that still remembered the 'Ways of Survival'?

She didn't know the answer to that, and could only swallow back the words circling around on the tip of her tongue.

Unexpectedly, it was he who opened his mouth first. "If you want to rescue him, then you need to get to the subway beyond the 'Final Wall'. The problem with that is you can never reach there through the regular methods of crossing the world-lines."

Han Su-Yeong was surprised for a second there, but still managed to reply quickly enough. "…… If we open the 'Final Wall' one more time, we can go there. We need to gather the 'fragments' to open the door, though. And looks like we already have one of the fragments."

「That's what Han Su-Yeong said.」

Even she could more or less hear [The 4th Wall]'s intermittent

messages nowadays.

These texts butted in irregularly as if to explain the world – perhaps they were sentences currently being recorded on [The 4th Wall] that this world-line's Kim DokJa possessed.

"The issue is with the other fragments."

The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' Yu Sang-Ah used to possess.

The 'Wall that Divides Good and Evil' Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Gil-Yeong used to possess.

And finally, the 'Wall of Impossible Communication' Jang Ha-Yeong used to possess.

Those 'walls' were used up while opening the Final Wall. There must've been a way to get them back, but the current Han Su-Yeong couldn't think of one.

"Han Su-Yeong."

"What now?"

"This is the third lap."

Third lap?

Only after hearing that did she realise that the same exact scenery as earlier was laid out before her eyes. It was the sight she encountered when stepping foot in this district for the first time. They had been running in a massive loop until now.

"What did you see? I was looking at the birds on top of the tower," said Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"Those birds always return there during this time of the day."

"……"

"And that cafe, it's always full around this time every day."

"You……"

"Have you seen the clock tower back in Kaixenix? Faces of different people are engraved into the second, minute, and hour hands. Your face is also there."

Han Su-Yeong followed after Yu Jung-Hyeok's words and turned her head. The world as described by him was indeed right here. Maybe he had been staring at this scenery while looping around many, many times.

"Why are you looking at stuff like that, though? Have you finally gone insane?"

Han Su-Yeong felt that him looping alone was truly a pity and could only say that as her reply.

That prompted him to say this, however.

"If you run one more time……" Yu Jung-Hyeok had come to a stop even before she had noticed it, and he was now asking her. "If you get a chance to run again, do you believe you can see it better the next time?"

Han Su-Yeong also came to a halt right there.

[Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's' Stigma is emitting a faint light.]

In all honesty, she already knew. From a while ago, she realised what he was trying to say. However, she wanted to pretend that she had no clue, instead.

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Because, she thought that method was not a good one at all.

"You……”

The way to save Kim Dok-Ja.

The way to gather the three disappeared 'fragments' again.

The way that only Yu Jung-Hyeok could resort to.

「And that was to return to the world where that 'Wall' still existed. And then, to walk on the hellish landscape once more.」

"You wanna solo that crazy thing all over again??"

Not even she and Kim Dok-Ja wanted that.

On top of that, no matter how amazing Yu Jung-Hyeok was, there was no way he could, all by himself……

"No, it's impossible alone."

His calm, collected declaration caused her eyes to blink.

"That's why I asked you. What did you see?"

The Status of Transcendence was rousing up from Yu Jung-Hyeok's rippling muscles.

This transcended form that surpassed Constellations was evolving once more.

[Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's' Stigma is evolving.]

Han Su-Yeong looked back at the path she had run past and saw the tower's clock hands circling around. She could see the engraving of her own dumb-looking face on the diligently-moving second hand.

What would happen if she got to run on that 'time' once more? If so, would she be able to run even better than before?

Maybe, she might be able to – if she made a thorough preparation beforehand. And……

if she got to work together with the comrades she lived with in this world, too.

She looked back, only to discover the regressor that had run on that very distance countless times staring right back at her.

"I need your help, Han Su-Yeong."

[Stigma, 'Regression', has acquired the possibility of 'Group Regression'!]

Fin.

It had already been two months since I started observing the 0th turn.

There was this one thing I got to learn during this time period, and it'd be the fact that regardless of which regression turn it was, Yu Jung-Hyeok would always be Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"I'm not selecting anyone."

[Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' has not selected his Constellation backer.]

And with that, the second sponsor selection came to a close.

If I were to include the sudden, unannounced sponsor selection that happened in the middle, then this would be the third time.

Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't choose his Constellation backer during all three occasions. He couldn't choose during the first one because of me, though.

Tsu-chuchut……

My palm that smacked the back of his head still stung quite a bit. Well, I did forcibly butt in during the beginning scenario and knocked out an Incarnation about to enter an important event, so even I wouldn't be able to escape from the after-effects.

Whatever the case might have been, Yu Jung-Hyeok began showing an unbelievable level of wariness during the 'sponsor selection' events afterwards.

「Constellations… They are capable of knocking me out cold without the slightest warning. I must not carelessly trust them.」

It surely was an unfortunate turn of event from my perspective. Still, others also didn't get selected, so it wasn't such a big loss either way.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', complains by asking why he was not chosen.]

[Constellation, 'Mouse that Eats Fingernails', is drooling after Incarnation Yu Jung-Hyeok's fingernails.]

[Constellation, 'Founder of Humanity', is interested in Incarnation Yu Jung-Hyeok.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is puzzled by Incarnation Yu Jung-Hyeok's action.]

Time passed and Bihyung's channel gradually grew larger, and the number of Modifiers I knew had increased somewhat in the meantime.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is greeting the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is snorting derisively.]

Uriel…

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is cackling.]

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is happily greeting the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', has started picking his nose.]

Right, this was how the proper 'Ways of Survival' should be.

I was remembering the figures of the Constellations I knew and had forgotten about that fact for a moment there.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', warns other Constellations that the

'Demon King of Salvation' is an attention seeker, so others should be wary.]

Of course, the one I found most annoying of all was this dude. Just as I was about to say something even at the cost of wasting Coins, Bihyung opened his mouth first.

[Conquering King Yu Jung-Hyeok, will you really not select any Constellation backer?

I advise you to think about this one more time.]

"No, I'm not choosing."

[Hmm, well, then. Dear Constellation-nims that applied to become the sponsors. Allow me to present you with a special opportunity to appeal to this particular Incarnation!]

Bihyung came to be blessed with several 'Find the Incarnation' groups all thanks to Yu Jung-Hyeok, and as a result, that huge grin refused to leave his face the whole day long.

He probably had figured out that this was his chance to score big.

A short while later, a new message window popped up before my eyes.

[Dokkaebi Bihyung presents – a special sponsorship opportunity!]

[Please sponsor an item to the Incarnation of your choosing.]

I was about to thoughtlessly tap on the 'Confirm' icon only to spot a very small fine print all the way at the bottom of the window.

*3500 Coins will automatically be deducted when purchasing the applicable item.

I spat out a soft sigh.

[Current Coin balance: 500 C]

「Stu pid Kim Dok Ja」

As I've completely emptied the 's coffers while clearing the Final Scenario, obviously I wouldn't have any Coins left to my name now.

I pondered if I could mass-produce Coins somehow by abusing the authority of the

'Most Ancient Dream', but the efficiency of that was not very good with my current power level so that plan had been put on hold for now.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says that if you sign the contract with him, he can turn you into a really cool Black Flame Dragon……]

[Constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', says that if you sign the contract with him, the legendary brew of the Olympus will specially

be……]

[Constellation, 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade', says if you sign the contract with

her, the mid-rank starter pack will be……]

The sponsorship messages from the Constellations rained down from the sky.

Hell, Constellations promising to shower him with early-stages special items, the kind that even I didn't get to use, were practically lining up in a queue here.

Even in the original novel, Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 3rd turn didn't enjoy this level of attention. So, how did a mere 0th turn become this famous? Quite simple, actually.

[Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' is rejecting the offers of Constellations.]

"That's not enough."

That was all because the 0th turn Yu Jung-Hyeok was way too full of himself.

"There are far too many willing to give me such useless things. Isn't there anyone willing to share information on hidden pieces?"

[Constellation, 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade', is sweating profusely while replying that she doesn't know much about such topics.]

"Is there anyone who can show me something similar to the revelations of the future?"

[Constellation, 'Master of Sky Walk', says leaking such information is against the rules.]

"You all are worse than this Demon King of Salvation, then."

[Portion of Constellations are seriously curious about the true identity of the 'Demon King of Salvation'!]

And so, the 'Demon King of Salvation' began to enjoy an unprecedented level of popularity during the 0th turn regardless of his wishes.

- Demon King of Salvation! Leaker of the future revelations?

- reveals leaking predictions is impossible, Probability-wise…

- No Demon King named 'Demon King of Salvation' exists, declares Demon King Association.

- Abyssal Black Flame Dragon: Modifier 'Demon King of Salvation' is similar to the one he used to have…

By reading the information coming in through the , I gained new appreciation on what the life of a Constellation entailed.

So, an Incarnation becoming a Constellation, and being one already at the start of the scenarios, could be this different, is it?

[Your fame has started spreading around .]

[Portion of gossipers have created a song called 'Conman Demon King of Salvation'

and have begun spreading it.]

[You have acquired 5000 Coins through the rise of your popularity.]

Whatever the case might have been, it wasn't such a bad deal for me.

[Heheh. Dear 'Demon King of Salvation'-nim. Will you continue with your patronage of my channel this month as well?]

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', replies with 'of course'.]

[All thanks to you, dear Demon King-nim, this month's revenue has shot up by a noticeable amount. If it's not too much trouble, may I enquire about your true name……? Honestly, I've never seen anyone treat Probability like ratshit as much as you, Demon King-nim. Ah, hahaha. That was a compliment, of course!]

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says he can't reveal his true name.]

[Is that so? How unfortunate. Honestly, I'm slightly puzzled by why someone as great as you decided to stick by this lowly one's channel. It's not like I've got an amazing backing or anything……]

Bihyung's expression showed his lack of confidence. I quietly stared at him for a bit before replying with these words.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says he's simply repaying his debt.]

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A book you've read once before could be read again without too much hassle. However, you could also run into a road block in unexpected places.

That's how the 0th turn felt like to me.

[Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' has not selected his Constellation backer.]

In a certain way, Yu Jung-Hyeok's 0th turn was pretty similar to my own world-line.

Here was a tale that had deviated greatly from the predetermined plot development.

…Now that we were this far along, it should be impossible to go back to the plot of the original 0th turn, right?

"Jung-Hyeok-ssi. Will it be fine to install the barricades over here?"

The Emperor of Steelsword, Yi Hyeon-Seong.

"Oii, Captain! You promised to teach me that swordsmanship, didn't you?!"

The Demon of Delusions, Kim Nam-Woon.

"Master. Can I go item farming for a bit after this scenario ends?"

The Naval Admiral, Yi Ji-Hye.

And also, one more person had been added to the ranks, someone who shouldn't even be there during the 0th turn.

「When you're about to pass by the Geumho Station, you must recruit that person.」

Maybe this was me just being greedy. In this world, Yu Sang-Ah, Yi Gil-Yeong, and even I didn't exist, but…

But at least there was one person that could recruit.

"Hyeon-Seong-ssi, it's not level over there."

The Judge that Destroys Evil, Jeong Hui-Won.

I watched her go through the checklist of all the things her companions had missed,

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and fell into the reminiscence of the past.

「"I was really happy back then. When we went to the department store together to buy new clothes and visited like a bunch of

celebs."」

Although I handed over a large portion of my memories to the 49% Avatar, I still retained quite a lot. I focused myself in order to stay on the right path as the pages of memories rushed in like an incoming storm.

「"That's why, you are someone who can only do this, right?"」

The 'Jeong Hui-Won' I remember should be alright.

Well, the story of that world came to a good end, after all. Companions in that place should be going to the Han River and to the ocean, spending their peaceful days with a version of me.

I murmured that as if hypnotise myself and tried hard to focus on the world immediately before my eyes.

「Th is isn t yo ur wor ld ei ther」

I know.

「Kim Dok-Ja's world couldn't be found anywhere now.」

To an existence that saw all the worlds as dreams, there was no meaning to something like 'one true reality'. And to forget about that fact, I poured all my being in observing the spectacle laid out before my eyes. I found it preferable to become a thoughtless Constellation at this point. If I were to become a greedy devourer of stories that enjoyed scenarios and created situations he wanted to see, then I'd get to forget about everything else.

"Orabeoni! Your Mi-Ah has done it!"

And fortunately enough, this story happened to be the one I loved the most.

"I told you not to use such a manner of speech in front of others."

"Hiiing."

A bitter chuckle floated up on my lips while I observed Yu Jung-Hyeok reprimand his little sister's manner of speech.

You should fix your own first, dude.

Even if he was supposed to be a pro gamer, he must've held normal conversations with other people before. How was it even possible for him to live in society with that crappy manner of speech?

Was it all down to his face's 'Probability'?

"The fourth scenario will soon begin. Everyone, get ready."

Through the information I conveyed, Yu Jung-Hyeok grew stronger little by little.

「Manage Kim Nam-Woon well so that he doesn't stray. He really respects you, so if you use that, things will become easy for you. Don't forget that no one starts as an evil person.」

Information that I sent his way by sacrificing an incredible amount of Probability every single time.

「Don't get cocky in the cinema dungeon and calmly clear it. The last boss there uses mental attacks, so before you face it, get this skill first and…… 」

「If you tie Gong Pil-Du down well during the early scenarios, he'll continue to be useful later on. He's not completely irredeemable, so do your best to reform him. The hint is…… 」

At first, Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't trust me, but after my revelations came true one by one, he began to believe me more and more.

About damn time. Just who was responsible for you coming this far, anyway? Honestly speaking, I was still a bit miffed by the fact that he hadn't chosen the 'Demon King of Salvation' as his Constellation backer yet.

"By the way, how come you know so much about the scenarios, captain?"

“……Someone is helping me out."

"Helping you out……?"

Thankfully, the 0th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok wasn't someone who'd forget all about his benefactor.

- Hand over the next revelation.

Yu Jung-Hyeok spent a huge wealth amounting to over 30,000 Coins and opened up a one-on-one secret communication line. It was an obvious thing to do since I kept feeding him important information, but still, I wanted to praise him for it.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is granting 'a portion of revelation' to Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

「The core of the fourth scenario is the 'Absolute Throne'. Remember that you must never…… 」

Tsu-chuchuchuchu……

An incredible amount of Probability was being exhausted every time I handed over the information to him.

The standard denomination of this world was 'stories'. So, it was rather obvious that spoiling the future events would damage the Probability far more than smacking Yu Jung-Hyeok in the back of his head.

"It's them!!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok's companions all pulled out their weapons at the same time while staring at the enemies flooding in. The closing chapters of the 4th scenario should soon begin.

[The 4th Wall] addressed me. 「Y ou kn ow what y ou ve be en d oing, ri ght? 」

Along with 'Pah-sususu' noise, the ends of my hand were melting down.

I observed the figure of Yu Jung-Hyeok confronting Seoul's 7 Kings. The gleaming

[Heaven Shaking Sword] gripped in his hand howled out a courageous roar.

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「No ma tter how h a r d you t r y」

The 0th turn's story had completely changed from the original. Yu Jung-Hyeok of this world-line would walk on a different path compared to every other Yu Jung-Hyeoks.

「Th at guy can ne ver see wh at's be yond the w all」

I knew the meaning behind [The 4th Wall]'s words.

There was no method of acquiring [The 4th Wall] in this world-line. Meaning, the last key to open the [Final Wall] didn't exist. Regardless of what he did, the 0th turn Yu Jung-Hyeok would never be able to get his hands on that key.

However, him failing to cross the [Final Wall] didn't mean he was fated to be unfortunate.

Because, as long as I was the 'Most Ancient Dream', his world-line wouldn't be destroyed even after the scenarios came to an end.

「Certain truths would make everyone unhappy simply by their existence.」

Even though I couldn't show him the 'truth', I could show him the 'ending' perfectly suitable for this story.

[Congratulations! Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' has passed every trial

of the 'Absolute Throne'!]

Eventually, Yu Jung-Hyeok defeated Seoul's 7 Kings and stood before the Absolute Throne. The attention of every Constellation within the Seoul dome, as well as all the citizens gathering in the Gwanghwamun, was closely focused on his actions.

He slowly unsheathed a certain sword hidden within his inner coat. It was the [Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword].

I substituted for the Lord of the Big Dipper constellation and lent him my powers.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok'.]

One by one, seven stars grew brighter and brighter. And the [Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword] held in his hand emitted blinding light as it evolved into a Star Relic.

[Outer Gods are astonished by your incredible strength!]

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[The Lords of the Big Dipper constellation are startled by your presence and are passing out from shock!]

[All the Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are……]

"I do not have any intentions of representing humans as disgraceful as you." Yu Jung-Hyeok continued on. "I do not plan on becoming a plaything for you vulgar Constellations, and… I shall not sit on this 'Absolute Throne'."

Those were words I thought I heard before from somewhere.

Yu Jung-Hyeok sword flashed next. "And I'll make sure no one else sits on this throne, either."

The [Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword], the weapon that could cut apart the Star Relic's connection to a Constellation. Yu Jung-Hyeok used this very sword to ceaselessly slam down on the [Absolute Throne]. He slammed down over and over again.

Soon enough, the loud 'Craaaack!' resounded out.

The night skies of brightened as if a midnight sun suddenly materialised, and an explosion of messages flooded out. The storm of Probability's aftermath caused by the distortion of the scenario had begun.

I quietly extended my hand and blocked that overflowing storm.

[The world-line is dissatisfied by your excessive meddling!]

[The applicable 'Overwrite' is beyond your mastery level!]

[Portion of your Fable will be lost!]

The current Yu Jung-Hyeok was going through the 0th turn.

Since he wasn't a regressor, he had no information related to the future, and he couldn't regain the techniques he used in prior turns through [Inheritance].

From now on, the scenarios would only get tougher. He couldn't use [Bookmark] like me, and couldn't rely on [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint], either.

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「As that was the case, Kim Dok-Ja knew very well what's necessary to fill that void.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok would not have to go through the regression.

He'd not become the 'Secretive Plotter', and…

…And, he'd not become the tragic pilgrim wandering in between the world-lines.

Yu Jung-Hyeok would get to see his deserved conclusion in this world.

[Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' has acquired his first-ever Fable!]

[Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's' new Fable has been created.]

He looked up at the sky. And also a Fable taking on the form of a white tiger was looking up at me from behind him, too. It was none other than that very Fable that protected me once upon a time.

[Fable, 'King of a Kingless World', is born.]

I could see Yu Jung-Hyeok's elated face through my disintegrating right thumb.

'Kim Dok-Ja' should not exist in this particular story.

「Even then, this was the story Kim Dok-Ja dearly wished to create.」

When I slowly closed my eyes, it felt like pages were floating up right before me.

Ancient pages, with traces of someone already having doodled on them.

「In that moment, Kim Dok-Ja made up his mind. He decided to personally write the story that didn't exist in the original.」

I began jotting something down above those pages.

One page, two pages – every time a page flipped by, time went by, too.

Fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth……

My fingers disappeared one by one every time a scenario was cleared.

They would regenerate some time later, but their size would always be smaller than before. I used those fingers to write the revelations – on the ending Yu Jung-Hyeok from the original desired, the conclusion I wanted to see, the mistakes I made, and things I gained new understandings of.

All these stories gathered as one, and soon, became a Fable.

And so, just how long passed by like this?

I slowly opened my eyes.

「Eventually, Yu Jung-Hyeok of the 0th turn had reached the final pages of the scenarios.」

Fin.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Heaven Shaking Sword] scythed through the air; it cut down the Constellations blocking his path, and sliced apart the Incarnations acting as their underlings.

Yu Jung-Hyeok truly fought hard.

He was followed by the companions that broke past the scenarios

together with him

– Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Jeong Hui-Won, Shin Yu-Seung, Kim Nam-Woon, Yi Seol-Hwa, Gong Pil-Du……

- System operation.

Seoul's 7 Kings were also together with them; King of Hidden Shadows Han Dong-Hoon, King of Beauty Min Ji-Won.

- Go, Yu Jung-Hyeok!

The King of Transcenders Jang Ha-Yeong was also here, as well.

- We'll take care of this, Conquering King.

Not only them, but also Incarnations from other nations, such as Fei Hu and Ranvir Khan – and even his sworn enemy, Anna Croft helped him.

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is cheering on Incarnation Yu Jung-Hyeok!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-Like Judge of Fire', is……]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon',……]

No other regression turn should be as complete as this one.

"Pacheonmaeng, we're moving out."

The Pacheonmaeng (破天盟). That was the name of the coalition Yu Jung-Hyeok had created.

The conclusion I completed, as well as the blueprint laid out by the 1863rd turn's Han Su-Yeong; Fables, the concentration of essence from all the regression turns found within the 'Ways of Survival', had begun telling their stories.

[Fable, 'King of a Kingless World', is talking a big game!]

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

It was as if every story happening up to now existed solely for this moment.

[But, how……? You shouldn't be able to come here yet……!]

Eventually, they could see the astonished expression of the Dokkaebi King beyond the wreckage of the Final Ark. Yu Jung-Hyeok and the members of Pacheonmang unhesitantly dashed towards him.

[Oh, you foolish Incarnations! Killing me has no meaning whatsoever. If

is destroyed, then you'll all disappear, too. A world-line with its events concluded will be abandoned. No one wants to look at such a world-line!]

The Dokkaebi King resisted desperately. As if to prove that his words were right, he utilised every single Fable he possessed to fight back. However, it was not enough; he vomited out Fables and knelt down. Even as he fell, he continued to grin.

[It's all over. Soon, this world-line's destruction will commence. It's simply not feasible that the great one would wish for a story like this……]

However, contrary to his expectation, the destruction did not commence. The was fine. The brows of Dokkaebi King shot up high.

['s Final Scenario has been concluded.]

[…Could it be……??]

During his final moments, Dokkaebi King looked behind him as if to comprehend a certain someone's gaze surely looking at him from beyond the expansive [Final Wall].

And right next moment, a line of text floated up over said wall.

「The legend of , Conquering King Yu Jung-Hyeok.」

The title card rose up on the screen. And along with a 'Beep-!', it was turned off. The now-darkened panel reflected the view of a classroom and that of children sitting closely together.

Their sparkling eyes were all focused on the face of a certain man getting ready to start his lecture. He slowly opened his mouth.

"I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok."

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"Children really loved that, Jung-Hyeok-ssi. As expected, you're really great at teaching kids."

“……They all seemed bored by my dull story, however."

Yi Seol-Hwa grinned wryly at Yu Jung-Hyeok's monotone voice.

"That's not true."

He put his coat on without showing any visible changes in his expression.

「It had already been five years after the scenario of the 0th world ended.」

After the scenarios ended, Yu Jung-Hyeok and his comrades began rebuilding the world.

Han Dong-Hoon got in touch with the government and created a new governing structure, while Yi Hyeon-Seong and Jeong Hui-Won went around suppressing the acts of terror from the criminal organisations.

Yi Ji-Hye defended the country's borders and helped out with reaching agreements with Incarnations from other nations, while Yi Seol-Hwa and Shin Yu-Seung rescued

orphaned children who lost their parents to the scenarios. The institution called [Star Counting Night] had been created for that purpose.

While leaving the institute, Yu Jung-Hyeok noticed the young children looking up at him. They were orphans created by the Constellations, but these kids would grow up while counting the disappeared stars.

"By the way, ahjussi?"

One of the children grasped the ends of Yu Jung-Hyeok's clothing. He looked back and the child, having swallowed the brave pill, was now pointing at the older man's head.

"Grey hair."

*

At around the seven-year mark after the scenario's conclusion, Yu Jung-Hyeok got married. His partner was Yi Seol-Hwa.

Yi Ji-Hye dabbing away her tears, Gong Pil-Du officiating in the ceremony, Jeong Hui-Won catching the bouquet… Shin Yu-Seung sneaked out of her university class and sang the congratulatory song.

They didn't have children of their own. Both of them didn't want to have any.

- There are too many children needing parents in this world already.

They established the institution and looked after the orphans. It was a decision that fit their personalities perfectly.

「Time continued to tick by; ten years, fifteen…… 」

Just like pages flipping past faster and faster in order to reach the conclusion, the time flow of the 0th turn continued to march forward relentlessly. Yu Jung-Hyeok grew older, just as he should.

More specifically, only he grew old – all because of an attribute he picked up while clearing the scenarios.

The legendary attribute, [Life Lived to Its Fullest].

During his one thousand-plus regression turn, Yu Jung-Hyeok never once used this skill. It was an attribute that a regressor like him had no use for.

「An attribute that, at the cost of living a fixed lifespan, fully unleashes the user's latent talents.」

However, the current him was from the 0th turn. He had no experience earned through regressions to fall back on, nor did have much of a talent to speak of, either. And that was why he had to choose this attribute. Because, only through this particular attribute could he be able to clear the remaining scenarios.

"Master, how old are you this year?" Yi Ji-Hye asked.

"I've already forgotten about such things as my age."

"Mm, it's been 20 years since the scenarios ended, so… Oh my god. It's already……"

"Humans all grow old and die."

"Argh, master. Seriously……!"

As long as the 's system existed, immortality wasn't an impossible dream. It wasn't uncommon to see beings that lived for hundreds, sometimes for thousands of years just like the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint or Kyrgios. Not only that, if you compiled enough Fables and became a Constellation, you could literally enjoy everlasting life. However, Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't do that.

「Stories without sacrifices do not exist.」

The night sky where the Bureau no longer existed, and Constellations had fallen. While staring at such a sky, Yu Jung-Hyeok continued to live in this world's days and nights.

「Then, 25 years later.」

And eventually, on a certain day after his hair had grown completely grey, he left the city.

"Captain, will you really seclude yourself in a backwater place like this??" Shin Yu-Seung asked.

"I don't enjoy noisy things."

"But, what about Seol-Hwa eonni??"

Yu Jung-Hyeok wordlessly polished his [Heaven Shaking Sword].

In a world with nothing left to cut down, arduously devoting himself to the ways of the sword that had lost its purpose – that was Yu Jung-Hyeok's chosen method of utilising his remaining life.

"Stuff like training in the ways of the sword can be done back in the Compl……"

Shin Yu-Seung couldn't finish her sentence, however. The clear surface of the [Heaven Shaking Sword]'s blade reflected Yu Jung-Hyeok's face. No one would think of him as a man in his 60s. Despite that…

Yu Jung-Hyeok would definitely die later. And Yi Seol-Hwa, left all alone, would have to carry on living a long, long life without him by her side.

Shin Yu-Seung's lips bobbed up and down several times, and just as she finally managed to open them fully, Kim Nam-Woon butted in first.

"Conquering King, you're now all decrepit and stuff! I guess I can finally win against you this year, right?"

He shouted out triumphantly and unfurled the bandages off his fist, then dashed towards Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"Ku-waaaaahk!! My arm! My arrrrm! No, wait! My eyes!!"

Kim Nam-Woon was flung away in one hit; he moaned in pain and collapsed on the ground.

Companions snickered softly; the sounds of Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Hyeon-Seong holding hands and chatting away; the figures of Yi Ji-Hye and Shin Yu-Seung bickering with each other…

I stared at all these scenes and at the same time, read the sentence overlapping above them.

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「Maybe, I could have witnessed similar sights and sounds as this one.」

It might have been a bit different, though; had been destroyed and the influence of its system was weakening in the world I used to live in, after all.

The people of my world would grow old, just like Yu Jung-Hyeok here. And amidst my companions steadily growing older, I too would have grown old as well.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's grey hair danced in the air as he watched his companions leave.

His back remained straight and tall even in his advanced age. His skin still retained its elasticity, and muscles on his arms were still strong.

Even then, his eyes no longer gleamed brightly like in the past.

「Kim Dok Ja y ou 've be en here for too l ong」 [The 4th Wall] addressed me. 「Wh en sta ying ins ide one dr eam for too l ong, it g e t s har der」

I understood what it was saying.

I was the 'Most Ancient Dream', and I had a duty to pay attention to all the worlds equally. However, I couldn't easily let go of this 0th turn. It felt to me that, if this story were to end here, then all the tragedies would begin anew, somehow.

In that case, if I continue to hold onto this story for as long as I can…

"Demon King of Salvation," Yu Jung-Hyeok raised his head to look at me. "Are you still curious about my story?"

I hesitated a little before replying.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', replies he still is.]

"This world is no longer mired in scenarios. There are no stimulations, nor any irregularities. Yet, why do you still wish to watch this story?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', replies that this is the story he wanted to see in the first place.]

"You're truly a strange creature."

Fables began rising up from behind Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[Fable, 'King of a Kingless World', is looking at the 'Demon King of Salvation.]

[Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', is looking at the 'Demon King of Salvation.]

[Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is looking at the 'Demon King

of Salvation.]

Fables were telling their stories while looking at me. The very same Fables that I earned once upon a time. Memories they had built up were now unfolding behind Yu Jung-Hyeok's back.

The world that I designed, the one that Yu Jung-Hyeok brought to reality. The 0th turn's story, completed in this manner.

"Sometimes, this peace feels like an illusion… And every now and then, I get the feeling that my life has been completed by someone else."

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is……]

"I didn't mean to say I'm unhappy."

Yu Jung-Hyeok smiled faintly.

I dazedly stared at him for a moment there, having finally learned that he was capable of such a smile.

"I was always worried about how I should live my life."

While lightly wielding the sword in the air, Yu Jung-Hyeok continued on. Every one of his sword swings contained his Fable. The Incarnation who knew how to shrewdly apply the set rules, that was him. Yu Jung-Hyeok might have spent his life fighting the system, but in all honesty, he was someone who'd shine even brighter when that very system was in play.

"A fight that can't be won holds no meaning to me."

His ability to analyse the situation faster than anyone, his quick wit allowing him to clearly calculate the gains and losses, and his talent at deciphering the advantages and disadvantages in a battle.

"However, I've grown curious lately. What would've happened to me if you didn't help?

What kind of a life would I have lived if I didn't win?"

I knew better than anyone what kind of a life Yu Jung-Hyeok lived after failing the 0th turn.

I knew all too well what would happen to him, what kind of a life he'd live, and the kind of ending he'd witness.

"You probably are aware of it already. I do not have much time left to live."

Fin.

Yu Jung-Hyeok planted his sword on the ground as he wobbled. His irises were becoming translucent next. His eyes, exhausted from fighting a lengthy battle, were losing their sights.

"If I choose you as my Constellation sponsor, will I get to finally meet you?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is shaking his head.]

"Just where are you exactly? All the stars in have fallen, so from

where are you watching over me?" Yu Jung-Hyeok continued to mutter out. "No, wait. I know the truth already. You are… probably beyond that [Wall], aren't you."

I couldn't say anything. I didn't expect the 0th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok to be able to catch onto that. He continued to speak in the meantime.

"Something felt off to me about this world."

It was my first time hearing such a shrewd tone of voice coming from him.

"One day, I suddenly came into existence in this world."

A man who came to exist in this world without a warning.

"Without any memories of my childhood, I was suddenly cast into this world. I wandered around an illegal work site, and through sheer luck, got spotted by the director, and thus became a pro gamer. But then out of the blue, someone abandoned a child on my doorstep. A child, supposedly my younger sister."

A conveniently-crafted life, a series of adversities created solely to become a tragedy later.

"Once, I searched for my parents. However, no matter how hard I searched, I couldn't find them. Even the professionals that could unearth the president's hidden illegitimate

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child couldn't find my parents. It was as if such things didn't exist in this world, to begin with."

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is……]

"So I ask you, 'Demon King of Salvation.' Who am I?"

My heart was in pain. The fact that Yu Jung-Hyeok had eventually

reached that question was endlessly tormenting me.

I needed to say something. Anything…

"Does the secret of this world lie beyond the wall, where you are?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', asks you if you're not happy currently.]

"I am happy," he replied without a shred of hesitation. "And that's why I'm even more curious about what lies beyond the wall."

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is……]

"I'm curious about the reason behind all the goodwill you've shown me. I'm also curious about the meaning of my life, where I was born, and why I had to come here.

If I had one more chance……”

From somewhere, sounds similar to the ticking clock hands could be heard.

「Kim Dok Ja」

I couldn't show Yu Jung-Hyeok what's beyond the [Wall]. Even if I was the 'Most Ancient Dream', that was still impossible.

Yu Jung-Hyeok continued on. "You told me this once upon a time. If I sign the contract with you, you will grant any one wish of mine. Back then, I didn't accept your offer because I was suspicious of you. However, if it's not too late……”

His fingers hovered in the air, searching for a log message that reached him in the distant past.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', wishes to become your Constellation sponsor.]

[Will you accept the offer?]

"I shall accept it now."

Dizziness rushed in and the shaking of my surroundings worsened.

I called out to [The 4th Wall].

'The 4th Wall.'

「Y ou c a n t」

It already knew what I was going to say.

The prerequisite condition needed for Yu Jung-Hyeok to cross the [Final Wall] was to gather all the 'fragments of the Final Wall'.

However, [The 4th Wall] had no intentions of transferring to Yu Jung-Hyeok.

I gritted my teeth and sent a message out.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says that wish can't be granted.]

"Why not?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says that it is a truly arduous path, that's why.]

"An arduous path?"

If I couldn't transfer [The 4th Wall] to him, then there was only one option for him to see the conclusion.

[Constellation 'Demon King of Salvation', says that if you wish to cross the [Wall], you must 'regress' first.]

"Regress?"

Along with the 'Tsu-chuchuchut!' noise, my entire figure was dyed in the sparks of Probability.

The world-line was telling me this.

It was saying that I mustn't inform him of this. It said, this information wasn't something the current Yu Jung-Hyeok should know.

Despite that, I bit down hard on my lip and shook off the world-line's opposition. Even if I had to sacrifice much more Probability, I wanted to show him the truth.

「1 8 6 4」

"1864? What's that supposed to mean?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says that is the number of times you must regress before you can witness the conclusion.]

Memories from the life I had lived became a Fable and began unfolding next.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says that even if you manage to live all those regression turns, the odds of you successfully seeing the conclusion will be extremely low.]

Not only that, the current Yu Jung-Hyeok had broken free from the 'original worldline'.

He was no longer Yu Jung-Hyeok from the original novel.

Time-lines had branched off, and the 'future' no longer existed.

Even if he did reach the 1864th turn, there was no guarantee that he'd meet 'Kim DokJa' in possession of [The 4th Wall]…

「Th ere i s」

What?

「Er ase the me mo ries of th is t u r n」

Goosebumps broke out all over my skin.

「What if I give Yu Jung-Hyeok the fragmented memories similar to the 'original' and

send him to the next turn?」

If so, the world-line should think of this Yu Jung-Hyeok as the 'original's Yu Jung-Hyeok'.

He'd be incorporated back into the original's world-line, and live through the first and the second regression turns without any memories from this life.

「However, Yu Jung-Hyeok would become miserable once more.」

「Why are y ou de ci ding th at?」

I slowly raised my head. Yu Jung-Hyeok was still talking to me.

"I don't care even if the odds are low."

[Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', has accepted your offer.]

The Fable began its storytelling, and the starlights seemed to extend even further.

[Your Incarnation is waiting for you to say something.]

I remained silent for a long time. And eventually, I came to a decision.

I had no choice but to tell him.

I slowly regulated my breath and opened my mouth.

[Yu Jung-Hyeok.]

Been a while since I spoke in my true voice. An incredible storm of Sparks raged on around me. I tried to suppress the incoming waves as much as possible, yet it was still this bad.

Yu Jung-Hyeok opened his eyes wide and looked up at the sky. "Was that your real voice?"

[That's right.]

"……I can hear it surprisingly well."

Yu Jung-Hyeok, going slowly deaf, muttered softly. A faint crease spread over the old man Yu Jung-Hyeok's expression. I pretended to not see that and spoke.

[I can send you back. However, if that happens, I won't be able to help you from the next turn onwards.]

The only way to make him reject the offer was to tell him the truth.

[You'll have to use nothing but your own powers to break past the scenarios. Those scenarios will be far worse than you can ever imagine, and… And, you might end up encountering something you didn't want to at the conclusion you'd eventually reach.]

I thought back to Yu Jung-Hyeok. I thought back to the sorrows of the 3rd turn, the anguish of the 4th, and the despair of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[And if you do choose 'regression', then… You will lose the majority of your memories as you cross over.]

Those words caused the soft sounds of Yu Jung-Hyeok sucking in his breath to come out. No matter how resolute his determination might be, this one should be a hard pill to swallow.

[Only the tiniest fragmented memories from the scenarios will remain in you.]

"……"

[Meaning, everything precious to you will disappear. Yi Seol-Hwa you remember, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Yi Ji-Hye, all of them will……]

"Just because I will forget about them, that doesn't mean they'll suddenly stop existing."

I shut my mouth then.

"They definitely continue to live in this world."

「They definitely continue to live in this world.」

Like branding a seal, those words slammed into a part of my head and invaded deep inside.

It felt as if a gigantic hand of fate was pouncing upon me.

「At that moment, Kim Dok-Ja realised that this was the true completion of the 0th turn.」

The reason why there was no trace of the 'Most Ancient Dream' in the 0th turn. The reason why, despite that fact, Yu Jung-Hyeok still managed to cross over to the first and then, to the second regression turns. Maybe it was……

[…You dumb bastard.]

I gathered my hands and used the power to manipulate the dream gathered in me.

The storm of Probability's aftermath crashing in caused my whole arm to scream in pain as if it was getting twisted and torn off from my body. I recalled all of Yu Jung-Hyeok's regression turns that I knew. I gathered all the lives he had led, as well as the Fables I knew, and created a certain Stigma.

A Stigma that acted as the motive power of this world, as well as the

source of all of Yu Jung-Hyeok's tragedies.

[Stigma, 'Regression', has been generated!]

[Your Stigma has been transferred to your Incarnation!]

Looking satisfied, Yu Jung-Hyeok accepted the Stigma.

[Stigma, 'Regression Lv.1', is getting ready to activate.]

"You said earlier that I'll lose my memories."

[…I did.]

"Will I lose everything related to you, too?"

I hesitated with my answer. Yu Jung-Hyeok asked me again.

"Even all that convenient information you told me, too?"

[…Yes.]

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"I see."

[If you regret it, then it's not too late to……]

"You also said you won't help me from the next regression turn onwards."

[I can't help you.]

"It's fine to help, however."

[Even if I want to, I can't.]

"I heard that the scenarios exist not just for the Incarnations, but Constellations, as well. Maybe, it was the same story for you."

[……]

"Tell me, you fool. If I continue to regress, will I ever get to meet you again?"

I couldn't say anything. These were utterances of someone who didn't know anything.

In every sense of the word, he was the 0th turn's dumbass continuously babbling on while having no clue about his own future.

Along with the words that hadn't been said yet, Yu Jung-Hyeok's ears began disappearing.

「The night sky was reflected in Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes.」

As if he was a child wondering about his origins, Yu Jung-Hyeok estimated where in the sky the [Wall] might be and extended his hand towards it.

He'd become the 'Secretive Plotter' someday, and…

…And at the same time, also become the 1864th turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok that I knew.

He'd grow to resent me, and eventually reach the truth of this world.

[Stigma, 'Regression Lv.1', is activating!]

[You have agreed to the activation of the Stigma.]

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Yu Jung-Hyeok's body began scattering away little by little. His arms, his legs, and then, his torso, too.

During the final moments, he called out to me.

"Demon King of Salvation."

With a truly strange and mystifying expression…

"I shall pray that you may continue to exist somewhere, too."

…Yu Jung-Hyeok's Incarnation body scattered into silvery powder and he left this world-line.

[The influence of the applicable world-line's 'Overwrite' function does not extend towards the character 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's' next regression turn.]

[Your Incarnation has forgotten your Modifier.]

[Your Incarnation has forgotten all memories related to you.]

[All information related to you are now marked as '???']

All of his memories that couldn't be recorded anywhere would now be lost forever.

In that case, where would all those memories go?

I stared at the flickering light for a very long time.

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"Hey, Yu Jung-Hyeok! Why aren't you saying anything?!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok ended up staggering after receiving a loud impact to the back of his head.

He turned around to discover Han Su-Yeong and her deep scowl.

"I said, how do we do this 'group regression' thing?"

"I can suddenly remember."

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"Remember what?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok stared back with a stupid face, and muttered in her direction.

"The 0th turn's memories."

Fin.

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「Hospital room, 9:12 AM」

- Gather in front of the Complex's eastern entrance 19:00 tomorrow. We'll go rescue Kim Dok-Ja beyond the [Final Wall].

Jeong Hui-Won received that text message last night. The sender was Han Su-Yeong.

As always, her text came across as rather curt.

After receiving that text, she dazedly stared outside the window for a long while.

「Jeong Hui-Won didn't want to go back to the scenario.」

She fought harder than any other Incarnations. She wished to save Kim Dok-Ja more than anyone, and also badly wanted to end the

scenarios, too. And eventually, she reached this place.

「The Final Wall she saw at the closing pages of the scenario.」

Even now, closing her eyes brought back all those vivid memories. The memories of fighting alongside Kim Dok-Ja after he became the 'Enemy of the Story'.

She survived the horrifying flood of Fables by cutting down many things over and over again. They destroyed the wall, and she reached her own last stop.

「However, Han Su-Yeong was now telling her to get on that train one more time.」

She was telling her to go to where the [Final Wall] was once more.

She was saying that they had left something behind in the train as they disembarked.

"Hui-Won-ssi."

Jeong Hui-Won only then noticed her trembling hand gripping the curtain.

"Hyeon-Seong-ssi, did you also get it?"

"Yes."

"What do you think?"

"……Dok-Ja-ssi we remember is right here with us."

The 'Kim Dok-Ja' they remembered was currently asleep. His lashes that forgot all the tragedies of this world quivered a little. Jeong Hui-Won quietly placed her hand over his eyes.

Some tragedies would end up disappearing just because they weren't

seen.

「This Kim Dok-Ja was the 'Kim Dok-Ja' they remembered.」

Kim Dok-Ja that survived Geumho Station, Chungmuro, Gwanghwamun, the Demon World, Olympus, and the Journey to the West, and even the Final Wall together with everyone, was right before her. He remembered the name of Jeong Hui-Won's sword, and he also remembered Yi Hyeon-Seong's trauma. He remembered the promise he made with his companions.

So, technically speaking, this was the 'Kim Dok-Ja' they loved, and the one she wanted to protect.

One would wonder if it was fine to divide a person so conveniently like that, but this problem wasn't about the issue of 'Avatar'. From the get-go, the meaning of liking someone was that you liked certain parts of that person.

The blood staining Kim Dok-Ja's wound emitted 'Pa-susu' noise and evaporated into smoke.

The crumbling Fables wandered in the air, before scattering outside the windows and into the sky above. Jeong Hui-Won didn't know where those Fables were heading off to. It might be that they were extinguished forever, or perhaps they could be returning to other Kim Dok-Ja.

「Kim Dok-Ja who remembered the 'Ways of Survival', who always loved that one single story.」

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Jeong Hui-Won didn't know anything about such Kim Dok-Ja.

No one could love something they didn't know much about.

"Hyeon-Seong-ssi."

"Yes?"

"If Dok-Ja-ssi was us, what would he have done?"

Yi Hyeon-Seong didn't reply for a long time.

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「Hospital room, 1:31 PM」

As if many people had come to visit already, lots of flowers and gifts were neatly placed on top of the hospital room's table. They were gifts prepared for the moment when Kim Dok-Ja finally woke up.

Jang Ha-Yeong fidgeted with the flower petal for a bit, before slowly making her way towards Kim Dok-Ja.

"You're the Kim Dok-Ja I remember, right? Kim Dok-Ja who saved me back in the Demon World."

The clock placed near his head was ticking by.

The man who made the 73rd Demon World's frozen time flow forward again.

The man who made her, despairing before the wall of potential, move forward again.

The Demon King of Salvation.

"Actually, I didn't want to come back to Earth back then." Jang Ha-Yeong smiled bitterly and spoke. "I didn't have any good memories of this place, you see."

She was a dimension traveller.

As was the case with most dimension hoppers, the process itself was uncertain. One

day, as she was working overtime deep into the night like always, she collapsed while sensing a sudden crippling pain in her heart. The moment her breathing cut out, she thought 'I've lived too hard', and if there was next life, she swore inwardly that she'd never 'work hard ever again'. And when she opened her eyes, she found herself in the Demon World.

Jang Ha-Yeong watched the residents of the Complex rushing somewhere to eat their lunch and murmured. "I ended up working hard again because of you."

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「Hospital room, 6:24 PM」

"Toss it. It's my turn now."

Along with Yi Gil-Yeong's words, Shin Yu-Seung flipped a 100 Won coin upwards. It spun around in the air and landed back on the back of her hand. It was heads.

"How many times did we toss this thing?" Yi Gil-Yeong asked.

"99."

"Then, it's 49 against 50."

Yi Gil-Yeong dusted his hands and stood up from his spot, prompting Yi Ji-Hye sitting on the guardian's bed to ask. "You guys, you're still making that wager? That wager about Dok-Ja ahjussi still being alive if it's heads or something?"

"What are you talking about? Ahjussi is alive right here, isn't he?"

"Okay, so what wager is it this time?"

The children didn't reply. Yi Ji-Hye frowned. "You two, do you really believe that claim?"

"What do you mean?"

"That story about the existence of another Dok-Ja ahjussi that we don't know about.

About how he didn't leave the subway train……"

The two kids didn't reply again. Yi Ji-Hye, dazedly looking at Kim

Dok-Ja, suddenly

jumped up from her spot and pointed at him. "This ahjussi is the Dok-Ja ahjussi I know of, okay?"

"……”

"He's the ahjussi who saved you and me, got that?"

"We know."

"You think that's all?"

Yi Ji-Hye continued to mouth off why this Dok-Ja was the real deal.

But strangely enough, she felt Kim Dok-Ja was getting even further away from her as her arguments continued on.

"And, and also……”

Yi Ji-Hye grasped Kim Dok-Ja's pale hand tightly.

It just didn't feel real to her. She barely managed to grow older along with the owner of this hand. She learned of losing someone precious, and was taught the values she needed to protect. And she somehow managed to start breathing again in this messed-up world.

Kim Dok-Ja too, must've learned all those from someone else.

Shin Yu-Seung muttered out. “…Ahjussi must've had a childhood too."

The founding Fable for the 'Demon King of Salvation' in was the 'King of a Kingless World'. However, that was the beginning of the 'Demon King of Salvation', not Kim Dok-Ja's.

「Most likely, the human Kim Dok-Ja's beginning wasn't as grandiose.」

In order to exist with the name of Kim Dok-Ja, what kind of stories did Kim Dok-Ja have to live through?

"Eonni." Shin Su-Yeong asked again.

"What now?"

"Are you planning to go tomorrow?"

"We agreed not to, didn't we?"

"But, you're still going, right?"

"No, I won't. I don't want to go back to the scenarios again."

Yi Ji-Hye looked at the heads of the children from above that had grown taller before she even realised it.

They were kids she still had to look after.

Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong quietly looked up at her, before the girl extended her hand out.

"Noona, you want to try it?" Yi Gil-Yeong asked.

Yi Ji-Hye wordlessly stared at the coin gripped in her hand. Then, slowly tossed it up in the air. It spun around and her palm grasped it again. However, she was unable to open her hand.

"Eonni?"

The sensation of the coin captured in her hand; she couldn't tell whether it was heads or tails, but without a doubt, the coin did exist.

"Are you alright?"

Yi Ji-Hye felt the texture of the coin in her hand for the longest time.

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「Hospital room, 10:48 PM.」

The first person to open her mouth was Yu Sang-Ah.

"The Fable level is still dropping lower."

As if the break down of a lifeform that should've normally taken several decades was happening at once, Kim Dok-Ja's blood continued to evaporate. Yi Su-Gyeong asked.

"Seol-Hwa-ssi, is there any way to……?"

"As of now……”

"Can't we go with the method used to save both of us? Such as, repairing the Fables."

Yi Seol-Hwa sighed softly and spoke while shifting her gaze in Yu Sang-Ah's direction.

"We chose the Fable repair method for both Su-Gyeong-ssi and Seol-Hwa-ssi because the 's system was functioning properly back then."

It was a world where skills and Stigmata existed. Everything in the world acted as the components of stories. And so, the 'treatment' in such a world was all about repairing the Fables.

"Recently, the skills or Fables have stopped activating as before. Even Aileen-ssi and I are gradually losing our powers," said Yi Seol-Hwa

“……Is that because the 's influence is disappearing?"

"With how things are like now, that's the likeliest possibility."

"The reason why Dok-Ja-ssi's wounds aren't healing must be of a similar nature."

Kim Dok-Ja before their eyes was an existence created out of the [Avatar] skill. And the

[Avatar] was a skill belonging to system.

Yi Seol-Hwa made her final diagnosis. "Dok-Ja-ssi will eventually disappear if he remains in this place."

Yi Su-Gyeong wordlessly stared at Kim Dok-Ja.

The world he spent all of his life to establish was now killing him. As if, the world where the stories had ended no longer needed Kim Dok-Ja.

Yi Su-Gyeong reached out and touched the sleeping Kim Dok-Ja's cheek with her hand.

"…… If I knew you'd end up like this, maybe I should've stopped you back then."

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The moment her extended hand touched his cheek, a Fable bloomed between the two.

It was the story of two people fighting inside the [Dark Castle]. Yi Su-Gyeong still remembered what happened back then.

His face looking back at her through [The 4th Wall] between them; a wall always existed between the two. However, Kim Dok-Ja knocking on that wall before she could was the first time he had ever done that.

Even if she turned back the clock, she'd still fail at stopping her son.

Yi Su-Gyeong stared at Kim Dok-Ja for a long time before holding her son's hand, a hand that always loved books. Most likely, the other Kim Dok-Ja was still busily

'scrolling' with these very hands while riding on the subway.

"Maybe I shouldn't have given you the name of Dok-Ja."

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「Industrial Complex eastern entrance, 8:00 PM.」

While standing like a pair of trees with mismatching height, Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok were waiting for their companions to arrive. Cold winter winds moistened their cheeks, and warm breath leaked out of their mouth.

Han Su-Yeong shoved her hands inside the parka and grumbled. "…… No one's coming."

They figured that something like this might happen. Han Su-Yeong elbowed Yu Jung-Hyeok on the side.

"Hey, isn't it fine with just us? If we combine my ingenious brain and your nonsensical fighting prowess, then……"

"It's impossible for us two."

"Argh, why not? You've been fine so far all alone, right? But this time, it'd be two of us, you know?"

Rather than replying, Yu Jung-Hyeok quietly looked at his own hand. A transparent ring was swirling around above that very hand.

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[Stigma, 'Regression' is evolving.]

The countless regression turns he lived through were writhing within that ring.

"You have no idea what it means to 'regress'," said Yu Jung-Hyeok, as he slowly distorted the ring within his palm. "You don't know what happens every time I go through the regression."

Fables grasped tightly within his fist howled out in agony.

Sentences were exploding like insect eggs. Those were screams of the ones that repeatedly died many times throughout his life.

"There is no such thing as the perfect regression, just like how there can be no Fable without sacrifices. If I regress again this time……”

More than likely, he'd lose someone again.

The world would sink into yet another tragedy.

The world about to be created in order to save Kim Dok-Ja could be destroyed without managing to save anyone, instead. Han Su-Yeong replied. "I know that. Also…”

She shifted her gaze over to the Complex's entrance and continued on. Since when was it? Several lengthy shadows were drawing closer to them under the cold wintery light.

"Those people also know it, too."

Fin.

Han Su-Yeong explained the plan in clear, concise words.

One, in order to rescue Kim Dok-Ja, they had to cross the [Final Wall].

Two, to cross the [Final Wall], they needed a total of five [fragments].

Three, the only remaining fragment in this world-line was [The 4th Wall] Kim Dok-Ja's Avatar possessed.

Four, to acquire the other four fragments, they were to perform 'group regression' and cross over to another world-line.

The companions stared at each other with slightly dazed expressions after hearing that very concise plan.

The first one to ask was Yi Ji-Hye. “…Will that even be possible?"

"This guy said it is, so I'm sure it will be," replied Han Su-Yeong.

After receiving her gaze, Yu Jung-Hyeok nodded his head. "It's possible. However, my Stigma hasn't finished evolving yet, so it might take a little while longer. We needed time to prepare ourselves, anyway."

“……Hold on. This 'regression' you speak of, Master, just what is the principle behind it?"

"When I activate the regression, we will all return to the past, to the starting point of the scenarios."

"Then, what about our own world?"

"A brand new world-line separate from this one will be created. If you want to count the regression number, then… It'll be the 1865th turn."

The 1865th world-line.

It was such a gob-smacking number that the companions could only blink their eyes in stupefaction.

"So, you're saying we should give it another shot over there."

As if she had already expected something like this before coming here, Jeong Hui-Won's expression as she said those words was filled with sheer determination.

However, not everyone held the same view as her.

"According to my knowledge, your 'regression' this time had been a little special, wasn't it?" Yu Sang-Ah was the one saying these words. "I read about 'regressions'

inside Dok-Ja-ssi's library so I know a few things about it, as well. All of your regressions until now had been based on the worldview of the 'Ways of Survival'.

However, this regression turn was a little bit special, wasn't it."

Other companions seemed to have finally realised, at least a little bit, what she was talking about.

The current 'world-line' was different from Yu Jung-Hyeok's past regressions. It was the world-line brought to life by Yu Jung-Hyeok's desire to see the 'end'.

A portion of [The 4th Wall] caved in, and that resulted in a world where reality and fiction combined into one. Its proof was that this regression turn featured some people who weren't characters from the 'Ways of Survival'.

"Can all of us really go back together? Can you assure us that'll be the case?"

If Yu Jung-Hyeok's 'regression' activated with the 'Ways of Survival' as its operational criteria, then several of the companions, such as Yu Sang-Ah and Yi Gil-Yeong, couldn't accompany him.

Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly blinked his eyes and replied. "Regression will activate with the world-line that I am currently in as its operational criteria."

"That means this 'Dok-Ja-ssi' can travel with us, too."

Yu Sang-Ah pointed to Kim Dok-Ja lying on the hospital bed behind them.

The reason why this world's Kim Dok-Ja was dying had to do with the power of the system weakening gradually. However, if they could take this Kim Dok-Ja with them through [Group Regression], then he'd go under 's system once more.

Yu Jung-Hyeok lightly nodded his head. “…Probably."

"Well, it's settled, then. Anyone not agreeing to it, raise your hands."

Shin Yu-Seung cautiously raised her hand at Han Su-Yeong's cocky tone of voice indicating that she didn't think anyone would oppose the decision.

"Argh, what do you think you are doing?" Han Su-Yeong asked back.

“……I'm not sure if this is the right thing to do. Didn't ahjussi want

Jung-Hyeok ahjussi to stop regressing?"

"That idiot never really cared about what we wanted, anyway. Even steven, I say."

"If Jung-Hyeok ahjussi regresses, scenarios will begin in the world again. Lots of people will die. And they'll be thrown into tragedies again. Constellations will use people as their toys… And many won't even get to clear the first scenario."

Shin Yu-Seung was right.

Perhaps, one could argue that she was the Incarnation who understood 'Kim Dok-Ja's'

thoughts better than anyone among the companions.

And for sure, he probably didn't want to create such misery.

However, Han Su-Yeong's thoughts were different. "And so, you think 'misery' won't happen if we don't regress?"

"Excuse me?"

Han Su-Yeong sighed lightly and looked up at the empty air. "Hey, you. Just for how long are you going to sit back and spectate?"

At the end of that question, a ball of fine hair suddenly popped up in the air.

[Bah-aht?]

Han Su-Yeong tutted unhappily in the direction of Biyu employing the innocent-looking puppy-eyes tactic. "You and that thing again."

That prompted Yu Jung-Hyeok to say something. "Biyu."

Biyu dry-coughed a bit before opening her mouth. [Whether you

regress or not, other world-lines will continue to be destroyed.]

Biyu's fluent Korean caused Shin Yu-Seung's jaw to drop.

She already knew that the small Dokkaebi could speak. But this would be the first time since the subway that they got to converse at length.

“……How do you know that?"

[Because I'm the 'Dokkaebi King' now, that's why.]

After going 'Ahem!', Biyu then pounded her chest with that small arm of hers.

Not only was she not a Dokkaebi affiliated with the Bureau, but she also happened to be one that inherited the Dokkaebi King's in full, too.

The only reason why the 's influence persisted at all was because of her, and at the same time, its gradual disappearance was the result of no Dokkaebis other than Biyu currently existing.

[You may not be aware of this, but world-lines are being born every minute and every second.]

“…Every minute and second?"

[That's right. Whenever an existence in a world makes a decision on something, a brand new world-line will be born. Every time you flipped that coin, Yu-Seung-ah, a new world-line was born and got destroyed.]

The world-lines were basically like a tree's branches that got divided whenever choices were made, Biyu explained.

[The 'regression' is simply a special method of choosing 'world-lines', that's all. It's like, you're returning to the point in time when the choice was made to start a new

branch.]

It was a head-trip of a revelation.

"In that case, just how many worlds, until now……"

Biyu opened her mouth again as if she had already read the vast, boundless despair of the gathered companions. [… Only Father would know that.]

'Father'.

There could only ever be one person that Biyu would refer to as her 'father' in all of the world-lines.

The Constellation responsible for establishing .

And the existence that ended up becoming this universe's 'Most Ancient Dream'.

[You can only change one world-line out of all the countless others out there.]

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The companions earnestly started cooking up their plan on the following day.

Project . Han Su-Yeong came up with that title.

"What was the standard of 'lifeform' as accepted by , again?"

Since they all decided to 'regress' once more, they had to come up with a truly perfect plan.

The companions often discussed the methods to thoroughly and completely conquer the scenarios, and the one topic their opinions seemed to clash far more than any other was the 'first scenario'.

"What about germs? Germs are also lifeforms, aren't they? If you spray hydrochloric acid on a hand, wouldn't you get, like, ten thousand Coins?"

"If such a thing was accepted, then a person doing nothing should've survived, too.

Our bodies kill germs in real-time, you know."

"Some people survived without doing anything, though."

"We can't afford to let fate decide for us. We definitely need to kill something."

"I killed a grasshopper to survive back then. And I heard Dok-Ja hyung even resorted to breaking grasshopper eggs to earn Coins."

Han Su-Yeong quietly listening to the various opinions began jotting them down on the memo.

"So, then. Insect eggs are counted as lifeforms in 's standards."

"Why don't the germs count, though?"

"I think it has something to do with you actually being able to perceive the taking of life. Should we ask Biyu about it?"

Even the 'Team Anna' featuring Selena Kim and Iris was added to the mix, and the strategy meeting became even livelier than before.

"This route is the best one to take during here."

“……No, hang on. This one's better. According to my [Predictive Plagiarism]…”

Kim Dok-Ja didn't exist in the next regression turn waiting for them. However, that didn't mean they knew nothing, either.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was in possession of the 1863rd turn's memories he got from the

'Secretive Plotter', and…

Han Su-Yeong possessed the [Predictive Plagiarism].

And Yu Sang-Ah had read the records within [The 4th Wall]'s library.

「And finally, they were the only beings that managed to go beyond the [Final Wall].」

Han Su-Yeong was able to breathe again after the first meeting came to an end. It had been only a week; according to Yu Jung-Hyeok, the 'group regression' would only be available in a month's time from now.

The companions sometimes argued with each other over the methods of clearing scenarios.

"The 「Greatest Sacrificial Lamb」. You gotta definitely……"

"Did you forget that Dok-Ja-ssi died back then? If you do it this way……"

They hated the scenario more than anyone out there.

Even then, even as they discussed it at length, the companions seemed excited about something, somehow.

Why was this? They regained their reality by barely surviving past the scenarios, yet how could they be so jovial when discussing a plan to return to the 'scenarios'?

「Reality didn't refer to a specific 'place'.」

Maybe this was because all of them couldn't forget about a certain someone.

Maybe, they just couldn't forget the time they spent together with that certain someone to survive the horrifying tragedy.

"I still remember everything about the [Cinema Dungeon]. Dok-Ja-ssi did this here……"

The locations where each of the companions joined the group might

have been different. The time they remembered, and the 'Kim Dok-Ja' they remembered, were also different.

Despite all that, just like how Yu Jung-Hyeok's numerous regression turns eventually gathered to become 'one person', it was a similar story for Kim Dok-Ja, as well.

"The [Absolute Throne]. According to Dok-Ja hyung's words…"

Parts of Kim Dok-Ja different people liked gathered to become one Kim Dok-Ja. And…

"……I miss it back then."

…And Kim Dok-Ja's parts gathered in that manner caused the companions to start loving the other parts still unfamiliar to them.

Han Su-Yeong slowly turned her head and her eyes caught the figure of Yu Jung-Hyeok sitting in a lotus position. Golden rings were looping around his entire body as he trained hard in order to evolve his Stigma.

Han Su-Yeong wordlessly observed him for a while, before asking a question. "Hey. I was curious about something."

"I'm concentrating, so stop bothering me."

"You told me earlier that you recalled the memories from the 0th turn, didn't you?"

One of the golden rings went out of the loop. As faint sparks danced around him, Yu Jung-Hyeok cracked open his eyelids just a little.

Han Su-Yeong grinned and asked again. "What exactly did you remember?"

He hesitated for a long time before replying. "Kim Dok-Ja was there."

"Wha? Seriously?"

"That's why I became certain. Certain that Kim Dok-Ja was still alive as the 'Most Ancient Dream'."

"What was he doing there, anyway?"

"I can't remember everything, but……" Yu Jung-Hyeok scowled heavily and while looking at his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword], spoke in a seething tone of voice. "I know for certain that he hit me in the back of my head."

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I opened my eyes while sensing the clunking, noisy vibration of the subway train.

「I t's ok to sl eep mo re Kim Dok Ja」

"I've slept enough."

I stretched my heavy-feeling limbs, and sensed the vitality return slowly to the rest of my body.

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Most of the powers I spent watching the 0th turn had been recovered. The right arm I sacrificed in order to facilitate Yu Jung-Hyeok's regression had almost fully regrown by now, too.

But for some reason, it felt as if my whole body was lighter than before. Should I say that my body size had shrunken overall?

「Yu Jung-Hyeok began his second life.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok as he lived through the first turn was now reflected on the display panel.

I recalled his figure as he was leaving the 0th turn. Even though he

had reached the most ideal conclusion that I could think of, he still chose to regress.

To find out the reason why he was born into this world.

To find the cause behind his existence in this reality.

"The 4th Wall."

「Ng」

"If every creature was born because someone had 'read' them…… You think there is an existence reading about me somewhere, too?"

[The 4th Wall] didn't reply. Maybe, even it also had no clue about this topic.

I began imagining the 'other reader' observing me from somewhere. However, it was harder than I thought. Just like how it was with the first 'Most Ancient Dream', a god could very well be a helpless, powerless creature. It could even be someone that I recognised, too.

Maybe it was one of the 's members?

Could it be that I existed in this place because they were imagining about me?

「Wan na l o o k?」

I shifted my gaze towards the screen displaying Yu Jung-Hyeok's 1st turn. "Maybe later.

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I still have lots of other world-lines to look at, after all."

It was around then that the subway's speed began decreasing gradually.

[The train will be flying over the outskirts of the dream.]

A portion of the screens was switched off, and the panoramic view of the universe was shown outside the windows, instead.

Even before I could ask, [The 4th Wall] spoke first.

「Uni ver se's ou ts kir ts, bor der zo nes of oth er dim en sio ns」

Faint rays of light could be spied within the universe's pitch-black night skies.

For sure, this seemed quite different from the 's universe. Because, this particular universe was shaped like a warped tree.

“…What's over there? Are there universes different than mine?"

「'Star Stream' is j u s t one of ma ny wo rldv iews in the gr eater uni ver se」

[Currently, the train is flying past the outskirts of 'Tree of Illusion'.]

[Currently, the train is passing through the Dark Dimension's time axis.]

The Tree of Illusion. That seemed like the name of the tree over there.

…Was I mistaken, though? I thought I heard that name before somewhere.

"Can we go there?"

「Too dan ger ous so bet ter not」

"Is there a 'Most Ancient Dream' over there, too?"

「Th ere is but dif fer ent n a m e」

Numerous roots extending well below, stems created out of countless souls, and way above them all, branches assimilated into the night sky. The roots and branches circled

around the vast distance of the universe to connect with each other, and something resembling a massive eye was in the middle – a lone eye, illuminating the universe with boiling, licking flames. The moment my gaze met that eye's, I was overcome with this inexplicable chill.

[A problem has occurred in the system!]

The subway's speed rapidly fell along with the loud clunking noise. Lights within the train flickered and died without warning, and a metallic screech reverberated within.

This was almost the same as back when the first scenario was issued. Loud ringing exploded in my ears, soon followed by a bizarre machine-like grinding noise next.

Something was approaching the window of the subway.

「Kim Dok Ja dan ger」

And then, I saw a single ray of light.

「Oth er di men sion's ab so lu te be ing」

At the end of that ray of light was a single blade. This light sliced past the Dark Stratum and flew straight in, seemingly splitting the entirety of the universe in the process. I clearly witnessed what that technique was.

That was 'Thrust'.

KWA-BOOOM!!

I was thrown ungainly to the floor as the explosion went off.

I reflexively awakened my Fables and hurriedly raised my head, only to discover the sword that had already broken past the train's entrance. It was a sword with a blade darker than the darkness itself. And a naked man was standing there glaring at me, his hand gripping that very sword.

"You bastard, are you the < >?"

Fin.

I could only stare at the buck-naked man in sheer stupefaction.

This situation was proving to be really difficult to comprehend.

"I asked you whether you are the < > or not."

"……No, hang on a minute. I'm the one with questions here. Just who are you? And what is this < >?"

"It seems that you are not the < >. But, how did you break past the Time Fall and enter here? Besides, what is this train? A subway… Is this yet another type of Tower of Nightmares? How does it even operate?"

This guy, words were obviously not getting through to him.

To think, he'd damage someone else's train and barge inside, only to start yapping on and on about his own stuff.

I activated the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] right away. And then, bore witness to a message I had never seen before.

[Applicable individual is a 'Character' from a worldview you are not familiar with.]

…A 'Character' from a worldview I wasn't familiar with?

Almost at the same time, bright light suddenly shone out from the naked man's eyes.

[Someone is activating a power not registered with the system!]

Circular disks were vigorously spinning above his retinas.

[An existence of another dimension is spying on your true nature!]

[Warning! This power cannot be fully blocked by 'The 4th Wall'!]

…Wha?

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Along with the sparks going wild in front of my eyes, all the Fables within me exploded forth as if to resist the opposition's power. The ones that reacted most viscerally were…

[Stigma 'Regression's' essence is writhing.]

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is baring its fangs!]

In an instant, a portion of subway's interior transformed into the view of the hellish landscape Yu Jung-Hyeok had lived through. The naked man looked at the world submerged in crimson hue and formed a stunned expression.

"This 'inherent world' is… Could it be, you're a regressor?"

…Inherent world?

I was about to throw a tackle, saying that that sounded like what Kim Nam-Woon might say. But then, the man's black sword suddenly began quivering with hatred.

"You are a bastard that turned his back on reality. So, die."

Just as the chilling light permeating within his blade edge moved towards me…

[The train is re-entering its normal tracks.]

[The authority of the 'Most Ancient Dream' is activating!]

[The system is ejecting the foreign matter found within!]

Along with the 'Shu-wuwuk!' noise, the man pointing his sword at me was rapidly sucked out towards the exit.

"You dare!"

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However, he stabbed his sword into the exit and held on, resolutely enduring the train's acceleration.

It was right at that moment that my body was transferred to another section of the subway.

[Emergency combat system is activating!]

[A portion of the subway used in the ejection will be discarded.]

I looked back to discover the tail section of the train that naked man was clinging onto had separated from the rest and was now drifting away into the universe. And the furious man began dashing in my direction next.

That figure of the man, with the muscles in his entire body ballooning up, gave me this sense of inexplicable terror.

"Hurry up! That bastard is coming after us!"

「Don t wo rry that g uy ca n't es cap e fr om the ti me a x is」

That man chased after the subway at a frightening turn of speed, but was unable to climb aboard again. It was as if a transparent wall existed between him and the train.

He continued to diligently run on the train tracks, but from a certain moment on, he stopped his pounding steps and glared quietly in this direction.

Only after that dude's figure had grown very far away was I able to breathe a sigh of relief.

“……Just what was that?"

「But ch er of Mo nar chs Jae hwan」

…Butcher of Monarchs??

「A mon ster that tra ined for sev eral bil lion ye ars in the ti me ax is」

I momentarily doubted my own hearing.

"How many years did you say?"

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「I al so don t kn ow exa ctly he exi sted be fore I was cre ated」

That guy was older than [The 4th Wall]? I was getting goosebumps just from the mere idea of that incredible length of time.

Could a human being endure billions of years without going insane?… No, hang on a second. He didn't seem quite right in his head, actually.

"Why was he trapped in there for billions of years, though?"

「To des troy the sy stem of the uni ver se he bel ongs to」

"We are not going to run into him again, are we?"

Maybe [The 4th Wall] was too tired, as there was no reply. It must've been busy fixing the damaged train.

I dusted my coat, the one where the sword belonging to a crazy bastard named Jae-Hwan had brushed past a moment earlier. Now that was truly a gob-smacking Thrust, alright. No Constellation or Transcender I've met so far would be able to perform such a powerful stabbing attack.

Would billions of years leave a human in that wretched state?

The restoration of the system must've been completed, as Fables from world-lines reappeared one by one on the train's windows. Yu Jung-Hyeok from the 1st turn shooting a terrifying glare at the heavens was among them. I quietly glared back at him for a little while, but suddenly grew scared of something.

"The 4th Wall."

「Wh at」

“……How old is Yu Jung-Hyeok now?"

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"We depart in a week's time."

Finally, Yu Jung-Hyeok's Stigma finished its evolution. People who agreed to participate

in the Project began preparing for their departure.

"Aileen-ssi, Bok-Sun-ssi, Yeong-Ran-ssi. We'll leave the Complex in your care."

"I see. So you decided to go as well."

Yi Su-Gyeong smiled faintly as people bade them goodbye. "Yes."

However, not everyone decided to travel with them.

"We can't go."

A portion of 'Team Anna', including 'Anna Croft' herself, chose to remain in this worldline.

"The system is gradually weakening, and this world is the closest to the conclusion that I'd been thinking of. That's why we'll remain in this world. However, there is someone who wishes to travel with you among our team, so… if it's not too much trouble, can you accept her, please?" Anna Croft asked.

The sole person from Team Anna joining the was none other than

'Selena Kim'. She smiled awkwardly and briefly explained that there was a debt she had to repay Kim Dok-Ja no matter what.

Han Su-Yeong confirmed for the last time. "Is there anyone else? Is this everyone from the Industrial Complex?"

Rather unexpectedly, the person who hesitantly raised his hand was Han Myeong-Oh.

"What's this, ahjussi? You're obviously going, right?"

"I've raised my hand to tell you that I can't go."

"……What?"

She knew that the original relationship between Han Myeong-Oh and Kim Dok-Ja wasn't very amicable. However, she figured that, as they experienced the scenarios together, they would've gotten a bit friendlier, but this…

"I can't go."

Only after hearing those words did Han Su-Yeong realise that he was holding the hand of a young girl.

「In this regression turn, there were some people they simply couldn't travel with.」

Han Su-Yeong quietly looked into the girl's face. Outwardly, she seemed to be in her teens, but her mental age probably hadn't even reached five yet.

Children who were born after the scenarios began couldn't accompany them during the regression. Because, this child at least didn't exist back at the beginning.

Han Su-Yeong shifted her gaze over to Han Myeong-Oh's aged face, before opening her mouth. "Got it. Ahjussi, you can stay."

"I'll leave Dok-Ja-ssi in your hands."

"You worry about yourself first. And since you're going to stay behind, take care of the Complex's matters, too. You will run into a shortage of manpower after we leave. If I catch you playing video games in some dark corner somewhere, I'm gonna jump across the world-lines and kick your ass, got that?"

It was then multiple vehicles rushed in from the distance. Waves of crowd jumped out of their black sedans and hurriedly crashed in like the incoming tide.

"Representative Han Su-Yeong-nim! Please grant us an interview!"

Han Su-Yeong frowned deeply.

"Is it true that you're planning a mass regression along with the Regressor?"

The display panel in the plaza was broadcasting her face in real-time. The unmistakable letters 'LIVE' were stuck on the corner of the broadcast, too. Her mask was already being shown to the rest of the country without her consent.

"We know that Representative Kim Dok-Ja-nim places importance on the current reality above all else. In that case, why did you make that kind of a decision?"

"What will happen to this world-line? Are you saying you'll abandon this world?"

Han Su-Yeong chuckled bitterly at these reporters attacking her as if she was the

history's worst betrayer or some such. "Abandoning this world? Are we really? You think we own this world or something?"

"Representative-nim, you have a duty to this wor……"

"Does this world still need us, anyway? When the scenarios are over and done with?"

Right in that moment, the expressions on the reporters transformed. Their camera lenses shone brightly as if they caught the scent of a scoop, and began capturing Han Su-Yeong's face even closer. She confirmed her visage on the display panel and continued on.

"What will change if we stay here? You lot will simply come up with weird laws to try and control us. You think we don't know about Dong-Hoon doing his absolute best to block the legislation from being passed in the National Assembly? You people don't need us any more. No, you fear us, instead."

"However, we don't know when the scenarios will begin again! What if Dokkaebis reappear in the world……!"

Han Su-Yeong grinned refreshingly. Since things had come down to this, she figured that this was for the better. "Did you mean someone like her, right?"

Something resembling a huge hot-air balloon was floating in the location she was looking at. Reporters realising the identity of that mysterious thing all screamed out in sheer terror.

[I am Biyu, the Dokkaebi King of this world-line.]

She sounded so forceful, as if the scenarios were starting again, reminding them of the starting point of the terror that brought forth the destruction of this world.

Biyu began chuckling as if she knew all about their fears.

[Those that were born will eventually be destroyed. However, this planet will be fine.

As long as there is no nuclear warfare, it'll last for tens of thousands of years without a problem. Well, you'll still have to occasionally dodge a few wayward asteroids that might come flying in your way, though.]

Having heard what the Dokkaebi was saying, the eyes of the reporters all went round

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from stupefaction.

Unfortunately, the real thing hadn't been said yet.

[Your main scenario has indeed ended. However… I still have the authority to issue sub-scenarios.]

The complexions of the reporters grew deathly pale from the term 'sub-scenario'.

"R-run away! That Dokkaebi, it's going to-!"

And then, a message popped up before their eyes.

[A ne■w sub scen■ario has arr■ived!]

The message window wasn't clear, perhaps due to the collapse of the Bureau. Even then, it wasn't hard to read its contents.

[You aren't forced to participate in this scenario. Only those who wish to will be accepted, and only the qualified volunteers will go through

the careful screening.]

[Applicable sub-scenario is for voluntary participation.]

[Because has been destroyed, I don't have any rewards to give you.

However, if you help out …]

Biyu was smiling as if she was satisfied by her own appearance as seen in the display panel.

[At the very least, you'll get to relive those moments you've always regretted about.]

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And another week passed by since then.

[Sub scenario, 'Capture the Squid', has a new volunteer.]

The people who managed to survive until the end of the scenarios. These people who had lost something precious to them had been gathering in Seoul one by one.

Yu Jung-Hyeok stared at the incoming waves of people and frowned deeply. "…… There are too many. This might get a little difficult."

"We gotta take as many as we can. That's the only way to save lots of people."

There seemed to be over five hundred volunteers even at a casual glance. The members of carefully interviewed them and through the analysis of the regression turn, they identified those with reasons for disqualification.

Yu Jung-Hyeok and Han Su-Yeong then specially focused on training them, and had them familiarised with all the necessary skills.

And, after a concerted effort to filter them out over and over again, the total number of remaining volunteers dwindled down to one hundred.

These one hundred were everyone they could bring along from this world-line.

“……Can we truly go back to the past?"

The one asking that question was Julius, the possessor of the attribute 'Judge of Three Generations'. He was ranked 52nd in the 'top 100 strongest humans', his nickname was 'Judge of Wrath'.

He had to lose all of his family, his friends, and comrades back in his country, and had been living on with grief and anger aimed at the world.

He wasn't the only one, however.

The faces of Japan's Asuka Ren, and even China's Fei Hu and India's Ranvir Khan, could be seen among the crowd. The strongest Incarnations that managed to survive the scenarios had all gathered here.

Julius shouted out. "Please tell us the truth! We have said nothing and endured your training regime until now, didn't we?! Is it true that we can go back to the past?"

"No, it's a lie," replied Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"What do you…… in that case, why did you even gather us……”

"What you're about to go back to isn't the 'past'. No, it's simply a different world-line.

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No matter what you do, humans can never go back to their past."

"I didn't come here to listen to that obvious……!"

"What has happened will never change. People you loved are already all dead."

His level tone of voice shut down the mouths of the others.

"They won't remember you. They won't recall their own demise, nor will they remember the time they spent with you. Every time you speak to them, you will gradually come to realise that the time you lived together can never be yours again."

Deep pain was pervading in each and every word he spoke.

These words were from the only man among them who had lived on while remembering the disappeared world-lines.

"You shall become even more lonely, and in the end, you will end up all alone. No one will be able to understand your pain. And rather than understanding your pain, the world will start calling you a regressor and curse you for stealing someone else's future, instead. None of you will belong to anywhere, and slowly wither away while still alive."

This was the curse of the regression.

"Even then, will you still choose to regress?"

And this was also the final test to become a regressor.

People who came here to become exactly that began exchanging glances. Some were scared off by the intimidation and stepped back, while some others, those that had been steeling themselves to what's to come, started taking deep breaths. And then, someone slowly stepped forward.

It was Asuka Ren, the Japanese who fought together with back in the [Peaceland]. Also, someone who lost more comrades than anyone here.

"I know that no matter what I do, it still won't bring back all those that I've lost.

However, if I regress……" She gripped her katana tightly, raised her head, and spoke up. "At a bare minimum, I might be able to save that world-line."

And then, people began standing next to her one by one.

"I don't care if my pain is meaningless. Even if everything was an illusion."

"Just once, if I could save them just once……!"

This was their determination. Some were captured by their own passion, while some were mired in sorrow.

And every one of them was longing for their past.

Yu Jung-Hyeok knew the truth.

「They will all grow to regret this moment.」

He could've said something. He could've told them what his comrades from repeated regressions have told him.

「"Captain. You must live in the present. Don't get lost in the events of the past."」

「"They are all just delusions, that's all."」

His dead comrades from the previous regression turns were saying those during this turn. Every time he heard them, Yu Jung-Hyeok quietly polished his sword and endured.

None of them could understand.

They couldn't understand that there was someone in this world who could never live in the present.

"Please, take us with you, Conquering King."

And that was why the regressor Yu Jung-Hyeok understood the people standing before his eyes. The past was the only present they could choose, and no one had the right to tell them they were wrong.

No, well, maybe a certain guy would be compelled to say that they were wrong.

「"Don't ever think that, just by discarding this turn, your next one will be better.

Because, just maybe, the regression turn you wish to abandon could very well be the

'one single turn' where you get to see the end of this world as a 'human being'.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly closed his eyes.

Could the current him reply to what Kim Dok-Ja had said back then?

He wasn't sure.

However, he was certain of one thing.

「There was someone in this world who would go as far as to abandon his 'humanity'

to see a certain story.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok stood up from his spot and raised his voice.

"We are heading out. Call on the Constellations."

Fin.

Yi Su-Gyeong was standing before the darkest star.

"Will you go with us?"

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is slowly opening her eyes.]

The location Persephone rested in wasn't the Underworld. That was because the passageway to her home had disappeared after collapsed. She was currently staying in the special guest room in the Industrial Complex. She stayed there, staring at the night sky every day – as if to comprehend the most ancient Fables.

[The fact that I'm still alive, it must mean that my ■■ isn't in this place, at the very least.]

She slowly turned her head, her eyes still radiating some warmth. Warmth, left behind by a certain someone. Yi Su-Gyeong knew whose Fable that was.

[Fable, 'Promise of the Darkest Night', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

It was from the King of the Underworld, who swore to be by her side until the end of the world. And like he promised, he died instead of Persephone at the end of the world.

[Let us go. We must save that child.]

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Jeong Hui-Won knocked on a worn-down door of the Complex's special guest room.

"Is anyone home?"

She turned the doorknob, and the door opened without resistance. What greeted her immediately afterwards a holographic figurine.

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「「Kim Dok-Ja, escaping from the water dragon!」」

It was the figurine of Kim Dok-Ja during his escape from the water dragon. Not only that, but the line he uttered during the event also floated up below the hologram, as well.

「"Alright, then. Time to go outside."」

Jeong Hui-Won stared at that bizarre 3D sculpture with a slightly dumbfounded face.

That wasn't the only figurine, though.

「「Kim Dok-Ja, destroying the Absolute Throne!」」

「「Kim Dok-Ja, liberating the Demon World!」」

“……Not even Yu-Seung or Gil-Yeong's rooms look like this."

As if she came to sightsee, Jeong Hui-Won studied each and every figurine. As she followed the lines of these action figures arranged by the year and the scenario number, she abruptly recalled their past. Uriel must've been looking at Kim Dok-Ja during all of these moments.

Among these was a rear tentacle from a squid, seemingly a part of a 'special limited edition' collection.

「「Kim Dok-Ja the Squid's last tentacle (made by Yangsan)」」

She looked at this thing with puzzled eyes, before reaching out to it.

But, just as her hand touched the glass display case, a true voice could be heard.

[If you carelessly touch that, Uriel's going to get really mad.]

How long had it been? An Archangel with a rather wane complexion was sitting by the table near the display case. No, wait – not many would actually recognise her as an Archangel these days.

A woman who silently flipped the pages of a book, not even bothering to look even though she was the one who started the conversation. Jeong Hui-Won quietly stared at this woman's long eyelashes before asking her. "Gabriel. Do you know where Uriel

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is?"

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming on Aquarius', is revealing her presence.]

The power of a Fable spread out like ripples from her entire figure. Perhaps this was the Archangel displaying her last vestige of pride.

[Oh, the last Incarnation of Eden.]

Gabriel closed the book gently, her eyes gleaming brightly. It seemed that she had already figured out why Jeong Hui-Won came to visit.

[I've crossed world-lines before. And it was truly a dizzying experience, indeed. But what all of you are trying to do here exceeds that. You won't make it out alive.]

"Is that how Eden jinxes others?"

[This is your reality. You must not run away from it. You can't seriously be considering undoing this ending you earned by finally bringing down the , now are you?]

The 'reality'. The weight of that word pressed down slightly on Jeong

Hui-Won's chest.

Rather than replying, though, she looked around at the room's de cor again, instead.

The bunk bed shared by Uriel and Gabriel was located on the corner. And the word

was stuck above it like a poster.

「The Nebula 'Eden' was finished. No one could deny that truth.」

"What makes one's reality isn't the environment nor the location."

Even though Eden was finished, someone still chose to call this very room her Eden.

Because, Archangels were still here.

「Even if there were only two.」

"It's a cool-looking Eden, though."

Jeong Hui-Won turned around to find Gabriel looking at her with trembling eyes.

"Can you tell me where Uriel is?"

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[…Behind you.]

Jeong Hui-Won looked back and sure enough, Uriel was there.

She must've been coming back from her junk food shopping trip, because her small figure was holding large bundles filled with all sorts of snacks.

Her emerald-hued eyes were opened wide as if she was quite startled at the moment.

Jeong Hui-Won stared at her Constellation sponsor for a long while.

The brilliant light of an Archangel couldn't almost be felt from Uriel. Her wings, that used to be on her back, had long disappeared. Even her clothes had changed. Instead of her favourite black dress, she was kitted out in a grey hoodie and a pair of track pants.

[Hui, Hui-Won-ah.]

Jeong Hui-Won knew better than anyone why Uriel ended up looking like that.

"Uriel."

「Wouldn't Uriel be happier if she remained here, honestly speaking?」

Uriel the Archangel had carried out the scenarios far, far longer than herself. In that case, was it the right thing to do, dragging her back into the depths of hell one more time?

Rather than opening her mouth, though, Jeong Hui-Won squeezed her fist tightly.

When she did, a faint lick of flame rose up from there.

The [Hellfire].

The purest flames in this world, given to her by her Constellation sponsor.

The moment that flame was lit up, the ever-so-slightly dim darkness of the room was illuminated by yet another sculpture emitting the exact same flame. Jeong Hui-Won turned her head towards it without thinking too much, and saw a figurine sporting the same face as hers. It wasn't only 'Kim Dok-Jas' in this room, as it turned out.

As if she was under a trance, Jeong Hui-Won approached the glass display case and looked inside. There she was, wielding the [Judge's Sword] and firing pure-white

[Hellfire].

「「My one and only Incarnation」」

Jeong Hui-Won worked hard to suppress the emotions powerfully welling up inside and spoke. "Uriel."

[Hui-Won-ah.]

The moment she heard that warm, gentle voice, Jeong Hui-Won realised something.

Her Constellation sponsor already knew everything.

"Please, cheer me on as I live that life one more time."

She slowly turned her head and saw Uriel smiling sorrowfully. As if to ask whether this would be alright or not. And towards such Uriel, Jeong Hui-Won knelt down.

"Please, become my Constellation sponsor one more time."

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"Where did that idiot Black Flame Dragon disappear to? Flame Dragon~!"

"General-nim! Where are you, my general-nim??"

Those voices came from Han Su-Yeong and Yi Ji-Hye, currently searching for their Constellations. And in the middle of the chaotic sea of people, Yu Jung-Hyeok was looking at his young sister next to him. She had this huge pout on her face, probably angry at something. He sighed deeply. "You'll be safer by remaining here."

"……”

"This world will soon stabilise. And this world will……”

"But, you aren't going to be here, oppa."

This would be Yu Mi-Ah's first time not using honorifics.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was about to reply to that, but changed what he wanted to say at the last second. "We will return."

"When?"

"After we get through to the end of the other world-line, and after we rescue Kim DokJa."

"And when will that be?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't answer.

"It'll be too dangerous. I can't take you there."

"Liar."

A faint trace of the transcendental aura leaked out from Yu Mi-Ah's figure. That was unmistakably the Status of a Transcender.

Rather surprisingly, Yu Mi-Ah had awakened the first stage of the Transcender after training only for the past few months. She was the youngest Transcender in history, which was truly a shocking level of talent.

"If you were going to say that now, why didn't you stop me from training? I received the same training as Gil-Yeong oppa and Yu-Seung eonni, didn't I?"

"…"

"Please be honest with me, oppa."

Yu Jung-Hyeok looked into the girl's eyes that showed not a hint of wavering, and slowly closed his.

They came up with a plan, so that no one would be lost. And it was far more foolproof and perfect than any other.

However, variables always had a way of rearing their heads without warning. And Yu Mi-Ah, she could potentially fall into danger. Yu Jung-Hyeok lowered his gaze, got down on his knees slightly, and looked straight at Yu Mi-Ah.

“……I'd like you to come with us."

That… was the reply she wanted to hear.

Her small hand patted him on the head.

“……As soon as you regress, our comrades will rush to fetch you."

"You'd all have died without me during the 'Capture the Flag' battles, anyway."

After saying that, Yu Mi-Ah opened her mouth wide. Yu Jung-Hyeok peered deep inside her mouth, and was about to say something with a deep frown on his face. But then…

"Hey! We found them all!"

Han Su-Yeong performing a deadly headlock on the Black Flame Dragon was walking over there while waving her hand. And behind her, Yi Ji-Hye clinging onto the arms of the Maritime War God and Goryeo's number one swordsman could be seen.

Yu Jung-Hyeok frowned at them instead. "And where is the monkey?"

Han Su-Yeong wordlessly pointed with her chin.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is currently acting self-important.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok narrowed his eyes and looked up in the air. The smirking Great Sage was floating up there.

"When did you arrive?"

[Aren't your preparations just too slow? If my maknae dies because of your tardiness, I'm going to rip you apart limb from limb where you stand.]

It seemed that, even though his Status had fallen and was destroyed, a Myth-grade wasn't called a 'myth' for no reason. Only the Great Sage was capable of emitting such vigour even when the 'system' had long disappeared.

Yu Jung-Hyeok replied tersely. "If you get in my way, I will not hesitate to cut you down."

The Great Sage smiled, his pearly-white teeth in full display.

[Why don't we end that unfinished battle of ours during the next turn? Let's find out if you can get anywhere remotely close to the 'Secretive Plotter'……]

"Okay, okay, sure thing. Is everyone finished with their preparations?"

Han Su-Yeong's voice caused tense expressions to form on the faces of the waiting Incarnations.

All the members of participating in this regression trip gathered around. Yu Sang-Ah, Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Gil-Yeong, Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Seol-Hwa, and Jang Ha-Yeong. In addition, even Yi Su-Gyeong and Selena Kim, too.

The Industrial Complex's residents came out to bade them goodbye.

"Conquering King, please remember what I told you."

"Fei Hu, the future of the continent rests on your shoulders."

"Ranvir Khan--"

And among the crowd, a small Dokkaebi was floating in the air.

"Biyu."

Shin Yu-Seung reached out even without realising it. Biyu, staying back along with the rest of the residents, carried a vaguely sorrowful expression.

「Biyu couldn't go with them.」

Just like how it was with Han Myeong-Oh's daughter, Biyu too was an existence born after the world's destruction had begun. She couldn't become the 'storyteller' during the path they were about to walk on.

Biyu spoke as if to console the companions. [Don't be too sad. Whichever world-line you end up, I'll always cheer you on. I'm the 'Dokkaebi King', you know. If I train a little bit harder, and if I uncover more of the inheritances the Wennys left behind, I should be able to cross the world-lines, too. In that case, we should be able to meet up again.]

"We'll wait for you. Even if it's tens of thousands of years later."

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Biyu cried out "Ba-aht!". And firecrackers went off all over the Industrial Complex like big-scale fireworks.

"We are heading out."

[Stigma, 'Group Regression Lv.1', is activating!]

Finally, Yu Jung-Hyeok commenced the regression. The moment his Stigma activated, the figures of Yu Jung-Hyeok and his companions were dyed in the shower of resplendent light. It was then.

"You stinking bastards!! You didn't even come to fetch me……!!"

Gong Pil-Du ran in from the distance and shouted angrily, before jumping into the shower of light belonging to the regressing party.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwakwa-!!

The world began breaking down.

The companions held each other's hands tightly and stared at the disappearing world.

Biyu's bright smile was distorting away.

Could they meet again?

Pain akin to their souls shattering into tiny little pieces followed soon after. Shin Yu-Seung clenched her teeth tightly.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok always had to endure these moments all by himself.」

Fortunately, he wasn't alone this time.

Shin Yu-Seung soon realised that she was travelling in the distant galaxy. The background was getting further away from her at a speed too fast to see. And different

from other world-lines could be seen, as well. The Outer Gods, abandoned inside the ashes of those stories were calling out to the companions.

[[Aaaaaaah]]

[[Overhereoverhereoverhereoverhere]]

Han Su-Yeong gripped Shin Yu-Seung's hand even tighter and raised her voice. "Keep your wits about you if you don't want to get sucked in there."

Shin Yu-Seung repeatedly looked back to the Outer Gods growing further away from her. Kim Dok-Ja saved 'Outer Gods' during the last regression turn. He gave names to these forgotten stories. Even then, this universe was still filled with so many other forgotten ones.

Han Su-Yeong spoke again. "We're not Kim Dok-Ja. We can't save all those worlds."

Not just Shin Yu-Seung, but the other companions knew that.

「The current 'them' were in too much of a hurry to save a single world before their eyes.」

…But, someday.

「Stories that couldn't see the end were all flowing towards somewhere.」

The Outer Gods in the distance all changed back to the beautiful galaxies. Every tragedy looked so captivating when viewed from afar.

Han Su-Yeong shouted out. "Hey! Was this thing supposed to take this long? Are you sure we're on the right tr…"

It was right then that they were slammed by the thunderous noise of a book being ripped apart.

Riiiiiiip-!!

[World-line has detected the activation of the 'Group Regression'!]

[is pointing out the Probability of the applicable Stigma!]

[Applicable Stigma is a power that exceeds the limit of the Probability!]

Something had gone wrong here.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Just as Han Su-Yeong was about to shout something out, the view out front was swallowed up by the darkness and it simply vanished. And when she opened her eyes again, she found herself abandoned in a plain resembling a blindingly-white snowfield.

“……What the hell?! Where am I??"

Her companions were nowhere to be seen. The only one she could see was Yu Jung-Hyeok carrying a stupid expression on his face.

“……The world-lines got entangled," said Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"What dogshit are you talking about?! Didn't we make all the right preparations??"

Yu Jung-Hyeok closed his eyes and began sensing something, before opening his mouth again. "We did prepare accordingly. And as for the rest of our companions… It seems that they reached the 1865th turn safely. Only we ended up here."

"And where is 'here'?"

“……Most likely, we're entrapped in the gap between the world-lines."

Han Su-Yeong surveyed her surroundings once more.

Several massive, pitch-black structures were floating up here and there within this snow-white field.

"Wait for a moment. I shall gather more Fables and reactivate the Stigma," said Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"How long will that take? Hurry up, will ya? If we get there too late, our plan or whatever will go down the drain!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok seemed to be in deep concentration already, as he didn't bother to reply.

Han Su-Yeong abruptly got up from her spot and extended her hand towards the nearest structure. When she did, something akin to jet-black graphite particles stained her hand.

"What the heck is……”

And right next moment, the overall shape of the structure was drawn out inside her mind.

「ㅁ」

She was sure of it. This structure, it was shaped like this. And as for that other structure just beyond her…

「ㅓ」

Slowly, so very slowly, a creeping chill ran down her spine. She began reading the structures one by one. And each one soon became a single phrase.

「The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint」

Fin.

The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

Han Su-Yeong narrowed her eyes after seeing that phrase. "…… Isn't that the name of Kim Dok-Ja's skill?"

Why would such a thing be engraved in the gap between the world-lines?

The words continued on.

「This was inevitable, I thought. And the reason why I accepted mother's actions also had to be this, as well.」

「The reason why I inexplicably started writing an essay… 」

「The reason why I had to become a son of a murderer… 」

These words were moving towards a certain direction at a constant speed. These sentences were fluently stretching from the past towards the future. It was then, Han Su-Yeong came to realise something.

The 'regression' was an act of branching out to a new world-line from a 'certain point onwards' while going backwards in the current world-line.

So, what would happen if they get stuck in this type of gap while going back in the world-line? If that's what really happened, then this point in time where such sentences could be read must be…

"Hey, Yu Jung-Hyeok! This…!"

When she looked back, she realised that Yu Jung-Hyeok too was looking at 'something else'.

Boom, ka-booom-!

The snowfield rumbled.

Someone was pounding on the gap of the world-lines they were stuck in.

「"Spit her out! I said, spit her out, now!!"」

「Kim Dok-Ja was crying.」

This situation, could it be……?

「I began crazily pounding on the wall.」

「I was overcome with goosebumps. To think that everything would become stories.

To think, every action we took and every word we spoke would become scenarios and morph into sentences above the wall.」

「"Shut up! This is how I feel!"」

She couldn't see his face. But, Han Su-Yeong could tell just by reading these sentences.

Kim Dok-Ja was responsible for these words – Kim Dok-Ja was fighting somewhere, within the past of the 3rd turn of the 'Ways of Survival'.

「Kim Dok-Ja wanted to know. What should he do? What should he do to break this wall down? Could this be the price for reading the 'Ways of Survival'? Did my own reality become a novel because I read that novel?」

When Han Su-Yeong read those sentences, she became sure of it.

"This is back then during the [Dark Castle]," said Han Su-Yeong.

"……The Dark Castle?"

"This event happened right after Kim Dok-Ja fought against the 'Devourer of the Dream'. He told me about it some time ago. He got trapped inside his own skill, and……"

Just before they reached the final scenario, Han Su-Yeong got a chance to talk to Kim Dok-Ja for the entire night. It was to discuss their plan moving forward, but also to talk about the matters of the past, as well. They thought that some stuff they didn't manage to

resolve could potentially serve as clues for the future.

- Now that I think about it, something did feel off back then. Someone called out to me, but… If it weren't for that voice, I might have ended up in some serious trouble in that place.

"Hey, Kim Dok-Ja!!"

"Han Su-Yeong, stop wasting your time. This is nothing more than recorded history."

The 'gap' must exist as a gap. Only then would the rest exist not as gaps.

However, the fact that sentences could be found in a place like this, didn't that mean there were still stories they haven't read yet?

Han Su-Yeong reached out towards the huge letters again. The pitch-black particles stained her hand this time as well.

But, they weren't the graphite particles. No, they were very small and really fine black particles made out of ones and zeroes.

Han Su-Yeong gripped the word even harder than before.

If this was the recorded story, then couldn't it be possible to change the records, somehow?

[A new Fable of Incarnation, 'Han Su-Yeong', is waking up!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

An incredible shower of sparks exploded and began attacking her whole body. It was as if every sentence existing in the world was glaring at her.

Yu Jung-Hyeok cried out. "You fool… Now isn't the……!"

[Fable, 'Revision Specialist', has begun its storytelling!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

"Hey! Wake the hell up!"

When she gripped the sentence, the life contained within it was transmitted to her. It

was Kim Dok-Ja's life. His life, lived for the purpose of writing this sentence on the

[Final Wall].

Han Su-Yeong shouted at Kim Dok-Ja currently wrestling against [The 4th Wall]. "This is your skill! Don't get swallowed up by your own skill!"

As if she was trying to revise the recorded sentence, she grabbed onto the entirety of that sentence and shook it, hard. Maybe she was wrong on this one. Kim Dok-Ja might be able to get through this danger all by himself, and her voice might never reach him.

Even then, Han Su-Yeong still left behind her own sentence on top of the [Wall].

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Because, maybe, just maybe, someone beyond the wall might get to hear her.

"Han Su-Yeong, the regression is starting again!"

"Shut up! Hey, you too! Hurry up and say something!"

Han Su-Yeong's and Yu Jung-Hyeok's figures began scattering away again under the bright rays of light. Before completely disappearing,

though, the frowning Yu Jung-Hyeok did say something.

"Cancel your skill, Kim Dok-Ja."

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Yu Sang-Ah blinked her eyes in a daze.

Faint rays of light were surrounding her. A monitor in front seemed to sway unsteadily.

It currently displayed the personnel records she was browsing just now.

“…Ah."

It didn't feel real to her. She blinked again, and felt the sensations picked up by her weak, frail body. This was the body of an Incarnation, unfettered by the 'blessings' of the system that also had lost the powers of skills and Stigmata. These were the sensations of a human being.

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She really did come back.

The things she needed to do popped up in her head one by one. First, confirm the starting point of her regression. Attempt communication with the other companions through the emergency contact lines. And then……

She suddenly shot up from her seat, causing many gazes to land on her next. She recalled old, familiar names one by one. Such as, deputy Kim Min-Woo, the section chief Jang Eun-Yeong, and…

"Hahah, so what do you think about the HR team? Sang-Ah-ssi, do you like it here?"

The man walking towards her with a bit of an attitude as if to pick a

fight with her –

that was the executive director Kang Yeong-Hyeon. And the person subserviently following after him… the head of the finance department, Han Myeong-Oh. The latter, cautiously reading the atmosphere until then, smiled sheepishly in her direction. He was not the 'Han Myeong-Oh' she grew to know for the past four years. The one she knew didn't cross over to this regression turn, after all.

"Yu Sang-Ah-ssi, the sale you made this time was truly commen……”

Without saying a word, she began running. She brushed past the executive director Kang and rushed into the corridor. Suddenly, her sense of reality seemed to be blurring.

Did she really, truly succeed in regressing?

The view of the world that used to be so familiar went past her.

She used to come to work here at the fixed time every morning, and went home at the designated hour, too.

That was the ruleset of this world, and she diligently stuck to it.

"Hey, look here! Yu Sang-Ah-ssi!"

Her employee ID card was exactly the same, too. There was a time in her past life when she struggled so hard to have this around her neck. As if this little thing could act as the proof of her true worth.

When she arrived at the QA team's offices, utterly out of breath, several employees

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began recognising her.

"Uh? Yu Sang-Ah-ssi?"

Her smartphone hidden in the pocket continuously cried out – incoming messages criticising her sudden, abrupt departure. And then, loud yells ringing out from behind her.

Yu Sang-Ah approached a certain partition, one step at a time.

「The person she remembered, he was there.」

A man wearing a headphone and looking up at her.

The spare battery always being charged in the corner of the partition.

That was where the 'Kim Dok-Ja' she remembered was.

Kim Dok-Ja, before the scenarios went underway.

Without realising it, she reached out and grasped both of his cheeks.

"Uht……??"

Kim Dok-Ja's eyes were opened really wide. Surrounding people, startled by her sudden actions, began murmuring to themselves. However, the words she was currently listening to didn't come from them.

「"Yu Sang-Ah, why are you so cold-hearted? Just like how this 'Kim Dok-Ja' is Kim Dok-Ja, 'Kim Dok-Ja left behind in that place' is also Kim Dok-Ja, you know. You are…"」

Han Su-Yeong's words were filling up the inside of her head.

Why did she respond so coldly back then?

"Dok-Ja-ssi."

She now knew, though. Looking at this Kim Dok-Ja's dumbfounded face, how could she not?

「"Su-Yeong-ah. I too have memories that I treasure."」

She was not an 'author' like Han Su-Yeong, nor was she the 'protagonist' like Yu Jung-Hyeok.

No, she was Yu Sang-Ah. Yu Sang-Ah, who was Kim Dok-Ja's colleague and also his friend.

For no reason whatsoever, tears welled up to obscure her vision, but she still managed to smile brightly.

「She returned here in order to protect this Kim Dok-Ja.」

Kim Dok-Ja's lips bobbed up and down. His murky eyes began to gain a semblance of light little by little as if he had finally recognised her. And when she witnessed the faint hints of sparks dancing within those eyes, Yu Sang-Ah opened her mouth.

"Let's go and find the story you've forgotten about."

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Yu Sang-Ah led Kim Dok-Ja and immediately left the company building. Just to make sure, she didn't forget to shout at other people too, as they dashed through the corridors.

"It's not too late now, so please leave the office and try to catch a grasshopper, at the very least!"

The duo reached the Gwanghwamun Station, and the very first one to arrive there, Jeong Hui-Won, greeted them. She stood under the undamaged statues of King Sejong and Yi Sun-Shin, and waved her hand.

"Yu Sang-Ah-ssi!"

Out of the happiness at this reunion, they energetically hugged each other. It seemed that the only one to reach here so far was Jeong Hui-Won.

"What's wrong with Dok-Ja-ssi?"

“…The state of his memories doesn't seem to be stable at the moment. He's experiencing

confusion at trying to perceive reality."

She could only guess that this state was due to him being an Avatar.

"What about Jung-Hyeok-ssi and Su-Yeong-ssi?" Yu Sang-Ah asked.

"I couldn't get a hold of them yet. I don't know about Jung-Hyeok-ssi, but Su-Yeong-ssi is the type to call everyone before doing anything else, so……"

It was already several hours since they successfully regressed.

Those two might even go as far as to borrow phones to contact the others. So, the fact that they didn't could only mean that something had possibly gone wrong somewhere.

"What about the others?"

"Gil-Yeong-ee is currently in the countryside, while Yu-Seung-ee and Ji-Hye said they might be a little late getting here. As for Hyeon-Seong-ssi…"

"Pant! Pant!! Hui-Won-ssi! Sang-Ah-ssi!"

A huge bear was running towards them from the distance while waving both of his hands. The bear also happened to be wearing a military uniform, too.

"Ehng? But, didn't you say you can't come out because you were stuck in the base?"

"I left without permission, actually."

"……Is it okay to do that?"

"The world is about to be destroyed, so it won't matter anyway."

"There is still some time left until then to say 'about to', you know."

While saying that, Jeong Hui-Won showed everyone her phone's screen displaying the timetable.

「D-28 until the start of the scenario.」

Yi Hyeon-Seong formed a serious expression. "…… Didn't we aim to regress to the day

before the beginning of the scenarios?"

"This is for the better, I think. We got ourselves more time to prepare, so we might be able to save more people this way.

Vrrr…

People began showing up in the chat room they agreed to join before disembarking.

Jeong Hui-Won used the translation app to read the incoming messages.

- China's Fei Hu has arrived safely. Plenty of fine dust, though.

- Ranvir Khan of India, I have arrived no problem. Along with the nostalgic smell, too.

- This is Asuka Ren from Japan. I see the familiar ceiling. No problem here, so far. (・ω

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The past world-line's 100 strongest Incarnations, having successfully regressed, were now gathering in one place.

The companions looking at each other nodded their heads simultaneously.

"Let's start with the operation."

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「D-21」

- Arrest warrant has been issued for 'Lieutenant Yi', suspected of stealing a large cache of firearms from the military base…

- The sudden propagation of 'apocalypse theory' in the internet recently has caused some experts to…

「D-14」

- The 'apocalypse theory', expected to fizzle out as a passing fad, still shows no signs of abating after two weeks.

- The apocalyptist 'Selena Kim' urges people to prepare supplies for the sudden

upheaval that will happen in two weeks' time…

- Several famous individuals from the world of finance have sympathised with the apocalypse theory, causing the public to criticise…

「D-7」

- Many ampoules containing microbes earmarked for research have been stolen from a prominent pharmaceutical company…

- Recently, the frog egg collection craze has swept across children in their teens…

「D-1」

- Finally, only one day remains until the 'day of the apocalypse' as prophesied by the apocalyptist 'Selena Kim', and…

「D-DAY」

Yi Seol-Hwa looked at the small ampoule gripped in her hand.

- Living insects or their eggs have been put inside the ampoules.

- To save as many people as possible, we even spread the locations of the hidden emergency ampoules in the internet, too.

- And now, time to pray for some good luck.

「4 hours before the apocalypse.」

- New Delhi, India. Preparations are complete.

- Beijing, China. Preparations are complete here, as well.

- Washington, USA. We're also ready.

「One hour before the apocalypse.」

- Seoul, South Korea. Preparations, complete.

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「Ten minutes before the apocalypse.」

- Team Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong. Finished with the deployment to the third subway line's location.

Currently at the Apgujeong Station's platform for the third subway line.

While listening to the sounds of subway train rumbling in closer, Shin Yu-Seung suddenly opened her mouth. "It's going to work, right?"

"Of course. How many frog eggs do you have on you?"

"102. What about you?"

"524."

Shin Yu-Seung furrowed her brows and glared at Yi Gil-Yeong's PET bottle.

"Hey, you! If you hog that many for yourself, what about other people……?!"

"Argh, they are all carrying ampoules with them, so it'll be fine. If I'm to become stronger than that sooty bastard, I gotta start really rich this time around! With this, I……!"

It was right then, someone snatched the PET bottle off Yi Gil-Yeong's hands. The boy jumped in shock and quickly looked back to spot a familiar man standing there.

"It's you, sooty bastard!"

"Jung-Hyeok ahjussi? When did you arrive?!"

"Just now. A problem occurred with the Stigma and that delayed us."

Yu Jung-Hyeok panted heavily and wiped the sweat off his forehead while tucking the PET bottle inside his jacket.

"What about Kim Dok-Ja?" He asked.

"Seol-Hwa eonni is with him because of his poor condition. Maybe because the scenario hasn't started yet, he was fine for a little while but he's unconscious again."

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"And the preparations for the operation?"

"It's all finished."

Rather than starting a lengthy explanation, Shin Yu-Seung simply handed a spare smartphone to Yu Jung-Hyeok, instead.

In the meantime, Yi Gil-Yeong grumbling away pulled out yet another

PET bottle.

"Hmph. I knew you'd steal mine, so I prepared another one earlier!"

「6:55 PM」

Another subway was approaching them from the distance. All three of them climbed aboard the train. This subway of the third line smelled exactly the same as before. A peaceful sight of not one person worrying about the impending apocalypse unfolded before their eyes.

While looking at the darkness of the tunnel streaming by them, Yi Gil-Yeong abruptly muttered to himself. "…… By the way, will the scenarios really start?"

With a slightly unsure expression, he sneaked a glance in Yu Jung-Hyeok's direction.

During the past 28 days, the boy had been preparing for the apocalypse harder than anyone else. Somewhat ironically, though, he was now worried about the apocalypse not happening at all.

Yu Jung-Hyeok addressed the fretting boy. "It'll begin. It did so for the past 1864 times, after all."

Those were the words coming from the man who waited for the apocalypse for a very long time. He didn't say anything else and quietly peered at his watch.

Three minutes. Two minutes. One minute. And finally…

「7:00 PM」

Along with the loud screech, the subway came to a sudden and immediate stop. The commuters all screamed in panic as a sudden bout of darkness visited them. And within this scene of utter pandemonium, only three people were carrying relieved expressions.

As if to illuminate this pitch-black darkness, Yu Jung-Hyeok's voice resounded out.

"The operation, , will now commence."

Fin.

「Once more, one hour before the apocalypse.」

“……Dammit, where the hell am I?"

Han Su-Yeong held her spinning head and hurriedly scanned her surroundings. The last thing she saw was the figure of Yu Jung-Hyeok disappearing within the shower of light. She quickly took a look at her own body.

It was a success.

Her much thinner arms, and muscles that lost their suppleness.

She couldn't sense any of the Fables she had compiled, the skills she trained in, nor even her Stigma.

However, that wasn't a problem. They had already thought up of what

to do with such issues, when the scenario got underway again. No, the real issue was…

"Crap, I don't have much time left."

Her smartphone's battery was almost out of juice, and she couldn't confirm the wellbeings of her companions at the moment. It was a fortune among misfortunes that she somehow managed to download the locations of her companions from the chat room just now.

“……These guys, they did pretty well without me."

Just a casual browse-through was enough for her to get a bead on where they were currently with their operation. That wasn't too surprising, though, considering that she was the one in charge of the operation in the first place.

But then, Han Su-Yeong's eyes scanning the map of the deployed locations began trembling.

"This idiot……”

She raised her head and looked around her.

Although it could be tight, there seemed to be enough time left still.

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「30 minutes before the apocalypse.」

Yi Ji-Hye's eyes dazedly staring at the clock was suddenly blocked by a head full of black hair.

"Hey, crybaby. You planning to stay behind for the night classes today?"

"N-no. Uh… ng."

It had already been 28 days since the regression, but she still hadn't gotten used to that nickname.

'Crybaby'.

When was the last time she heard someone call her that?

Once upon a time, she had other nicknames like that. And she had truly returned to such a time.

"Really? I was just asking, but why so suddenly?"

The other girl's eyes arched as if she was smiling.

For every single day during the past four years, Yi Ji-Hye had never forgotten those eyes. They belonged to a pale-skinned girl somewhat smaller than her. The blouse of her school uniform was missing a button. Her worn-out name tag, where her name could still be found.

「When she opens her eyes, the bloodshot irises would be staring right back her.」

Yi Ji-Hye's trembling right hand was clutching onto the pant leg of her gym uniform.

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「"Ji-Hye-yah, it'll be alright."」

Yi Ji-Hye desperately grabbed her trembling hand.

「"You must live."」

"Yi Ji-Hye?"

Her friend's hand approached from the air. Yi Ji-Hye avoided that hand almost as if she was having a seizure.

“……Ah, sorry. Were you saying something?" She hurriedly asked.

"Are you feeling okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine."

"You want to bounce together around seven?"

"We must not!!"

Yi Ji-Hye shot up from her seat and shouted out even before she realised it. Her classmates sitting near her all looked in her direction immediately. She sat back down and spoke again. "We'll be high school seniors in a little while, right? So we gotta study hard for that."

"……Crybaby, you sure you're not sick somewhere?"

「20 minutes before the apocalypse.」

The bell denoting the start of the first night class period went off. Yi Ji-Hye pulled something out from her inner pocket, a small box covered in a crinkled wrapper.

"Bo-Ri-yah. Here."

"What is it?"

Her friend saw the box and extended her hand. However, before handing over the item, Yi Ji-Hye told her friend in no uncertain terms first.

"You mustn't open it right now. Okay? Only open it when it's ten minutes before seven.

Understand?"

"You didn't, like, put insects in this thing, right? You know I've got a weak heart, don't you?"

Yi Ji-Hye momentarily froze at those words. "…… No, don't worry. I

will definitely make sure you won't die."

She finished what she wanted to say and stood up abruptly from her seat. Then, she pulled out a longsword stashed behind the classroom locker. Her surprised friend was still looking in her direction.

“……Where are you going?" Her friend asked.

"Bathroom."

Yi Ji-Hye immediately left the classroom. With good timing, the teacher in charge was walking towards her.

"Yi Ji-Hye? What are you doing? Go back inside the class! Night classes have begun already! And what are you carrying on your ba-"

"Teacher-nim, are you on duty today?"

It was the ethics teacher wearing the horn-rimmed glasses, with a slender physique and somewhat haggard eyes.

"Teacher-nim, please don't forget to open the no.2 locker in the staff room later!"

Yi Ji-Hye slipped past the teacher, but the latter hurriedly reached out to her shoulder.

"What? Where are you… Urgh? Why is she so strong… Hey! Yi Ji-Hye!!"

Yi Ji-Hye broke into a sprint. She ran down the stairs in an instant, entered the teacher's staff room and stole the keys to the broadcast studio. She then ran up to the third floor, her heart threatening to explode along the way.

「The first scenario of the 'Taepung Girls' High' location began several minutes earlier than other locations.」

That was the reason why Yi Ji-Hye had been deployed in this very location.

While panting breathlessly, she managed to unlock the door to find the rather familiar sight of the studio. The Taepung Girls' High boasted pretty high-end broadcasting equipment. Not only that, the school was given the authority to make broadcasts to the surrounding regions in case of emergency, as well.

While listening to the voice of the teacher still looking for her coming from downstairs, Yi Ji-Hye pulled out the emergency power source prepared earlier. She then calmly set up the broadcasting equipment.

As she connected the wiring, some memories in her mind also began to get connected, as well.

She used to work here as a crew member, and during the lunch hour, she'd play the music she liked. That was her life.

「At least, until the apocalypse came knocking.」

She realised it once more while looking at her still-alive friends. The only person to survive in the classroom on that fateful day was her and her alone.

“…Yi Ji-Hye."

She was startled by the voice and looked back, only to find an unexpected person there.

"Su-Yeong eonni?"

She must've been waiting for a while. Han Su-Yeong raised her body up from the darkness and quietly studied Yi Ji-Hye's face, before speaking up. "You don't look so good."

"I'm fine." Yi Ji-Hye stayed silent for a little while, then spoke again. "The scenario. It's going to start, right? Otherwise, I might get suspended later, you know."

"It'll start. By the way, you don't really have start yours from here. You should hurry up and go to another location. Let me take care of this place for you."

"No. This is where I need to start." Yi Ji-Hye smiled. "Because, this is where the 'wounded

sword demon' was born, after all."

She then slowly sucked in her breath.

The setting-up of the equipment was finally finished.

「Ten minutes before the apocalypse.」

And then, 'it' began.

Along with the 'Ku-gugugu' noise, the sensation of the world's 'nature' changing could be felt. Then, the sounds akin to drums being ripped apart came from an unknown location. And what came after that was……

[Oh, my. The channel here opened up sooner than scheduled. Ah, ah, can you hear me?]

Yi Ji-Hye looked at Han Su-Yeong. The moment she saw the latter's face, she knew.

Somewhat humorously, they had been living only for this moment.

[There is no need to panic, everyone. Let me say this first of all. This situation, it's not a film shoot. It's not a terror incident, nor are you currently dreaming. No, everyone, you're-]

That was the voice of the Dokkaebi she hated the most.

Screams resounded out from every classroom.

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Worth has begun.]

That was the signal to commence with their planned operation.

- Emergency broadcast will now begin.

Yi Ji-Hye's own voice was coming out from the speakers.

- Everyone, please listen to me. Those inside the classrooms, please open up the cabinet for the cleaning tools, while those in the staff room, please open the no.2

locker! Hurry!

Yi Ji-Hye knew. Her companions must be making the exact same face as hers about

now. Everyone should be witnessing this sight through the display panel the Dokkaebi had brought up.

- There is no need for you to kill each other. At least this time, there is no need.

Yi Ji-Hye thought about her companions. She recalled the promises made to them before coming to this world.

「"…… At least I want to choose what I kill."」

Shin Yu-Seung wouldn't start by killing a puppy anymore, and…

「"I'll save my aunt."」

Yi Gil-Yeong would get to save the person he detested.

「"Rather than going to the army again, I'll kill myself first."」

Yi Hyeon-Seong would leave the army, and…

「"I really want to save that grandma from back then."」

Yu Sang-Ah would get to save the person she didn't.

「"The Probability will only allow for one opportunity. Meaning, the 'Group Regression'

can't be used twice.」

And Yu Jung-Hyeok would never regress again.

Finally…

「"During this turn, I won't become the 'wounded sword demon'."」

As the clamour of the school's interior gradually died down, Yi Ji-Hye opened her mouth once more.

- Everyone, have you all found one for yourselves?

Just like Kim Dok-Ja of the past chucking the grasshoppers to other people…

- Everyone, throw those things down to the floor with everything you got!

Along with those words, Yi Ji-Hye broke the ampoule held tight in her hand.

[You have slaughtered a total of 133 lifeforms.]

[Slaughter breakdown: 133 frog eggs]

[Acquired coins will be halved as you have slaughtered lifeforms lacking defensive capability.]

[Total of 6650 Coins have been acquired.]

…

……

……

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Worth has concluded.]

「Once more, they shall create a story not found anywhere.」

The Dokkaebi in charge belatedly discovered the unfolding situation and appeared before Yi Ji-Hye.

[What the… Look here, you! What's the meaning of this? How can you even……!]

And right next second, a powerful storm of Probability's aftermath began slamming into the entirety of the scenario. Also, the noises of massive amounts of Coins being sucked out came from an unknown direction, too.

Yi Ji-Hye realised what was happening here.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Dear Constellation-nims!! This is a misunderstanding! Director… No, wait! This isn't my fau…… The Bureau's inventory… Uwaaaah!]

Accompanied by the noises of the channel being disbanded, the low-grade Dokkaebi

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screamed and disappeared.

「7:00 PM」

And that was the beginning.

The night skies of Seoul were reflected on the windows of the studio.

She saw the rift opening up on the other side of the sky.

「Subway's third line.」

"Everyone, please stay calm! Grab one of these, and throw it down! Hurry!"

「Gwanghwamun.」

"Do not panic, and break the bottles you just received on the floor! Do that and you will survive!"

「The hospital.」

"Anyone who didn't get an ampoule yet??"

Throughout all the locations in Seoul, unexpected events were taking place at the same time.

The prearranged scenario was changing.

[Unbelievable achievements are occurring simultaneously in every location of the scenario!]

[A massive amount of Coins are being taken out from the Bureau!]

The whole of was shivering from the explosion of Coins.

[is stunned by the sudden upheaval of the scenario!]

[Dokkaebis of the Bureau are freaking out at the excessive amount of Coins being taken out, and…!]

[Many Constellations observing the Korean Peninsula are……!]

The baptism of Coins exploding in the air like fireworks – it was the sight of a world coming to an end. Yi Ji-Hye looked to her side and found Han Su-Yeong also looking up at the same skies as her.

As if, she was searching for those who should be looking at them from the night sky.

"Let's go and save ahjussi."

Their operation had just got underway.

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While gasping out rough, heavy breaths, I regained my consciousness.

「It was unknown how much time had passed by.」

I slowly tried to move my body. Arms, legs, shoulders… without a doubt, the feedback I got had changed a lot from before.

「Kim Dok Ja y o u got a lot sm all er」

I smiled bitterly and looked down at my shrunken hand. The digits of my fingers had shortened by at least one centimetre compared to the last time I saw them. With a slightly exhausted voice, I asked a question. "…… How many regression turns have I seen so far?"

「7 8 6th tu rn」

I had no idea that reading something with every fibre of your being would be this difficult.

Every time Yu Jung-Hyeok and his comrades lived through one regression turn, I too had to live through it.

The second turn, the third, the fourth, and the fifth…

「Th at is th e des ti ny of th e Most Ancient Dream」

I read, and then read again, the Fables created by the countless choices, and I watched various world-lines spun off from them over and over again.

「Kim Dok-Ja read the world as if he was walking along a distant beach.」

Fable's waves rolled in and rolled out. And I gradually lost something of mine every time that happened. When I recalled something abruptly and looked back, I saw my own footprints left behind. Those prints were soon washed away by the incoming waves, and after

staring at the disappearing traces, I'd resume my walk forward.

Whenever I recalled the fact that I was gradually forgetting things within this flood of Fables, I began thinking about the regression turn I lived in. And then, the happiness of the people who should still be living there.

If I did…

"……Uh?"

The tips of my hands were trembling.

I suddenly couldn't remember the regression turn number I lived in. I unknowingly looked behind me, but the only things remaining there were Yu Jung-Hyeok's past regression turns.

「And what remains at the end, will be the desire to see the 'next story'.」

I looked down at my hands, now much smaller.

What was waiting for me at the end of this long, long journey?

「Kim Dok-Ja recalled the 'Most Ancient Dream' he saw during the Final Scenario.」

Would I eventually become the 'Most Ancient Dream' I saw back then?

Would I lose all of my memories and become a giant mass of unconsciousness that dreamt of an infinite universe?

「He didn't want to end up like that.」

I needed to think. I needed to remember.

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When I came to, my hand was clutching onto my smartphone out of an old habit. This small world protected me whenever I became too

anxious and too nervous.

The black screen, its battery having lost its charge a long time ago, reflected my face.

I crafted a simple Fable and used it to operate the phone. That prompted a familiar wallpaper to pop up. And that's where the novel that started all of this was.

- Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (final version).txt Until now, I deliberately avoided reading this final version.

I was scared that, if I read it, something somewhere would become set in stone. I didn't want the future my comrades were supposed to live in to be decided by a story written by someone else.

「However, shouldn't it be okay now?」

The 's story had ended, and my ■■ had been decided, as well.

「If I read this, wouldn't I be able to remember all those that I've forgotten?」

I still didn't know who tls123 was.

And that's why I was curious.

What did the author write on this 'final version'?

What was the conclusion the author came up with?

And this story, where and how was it supposed to end?

I slowly sucked in my breaths and extended my shrunken finger towards the text file.

Just like that day when I first began reading the 'Ways of Survival'.

「And so, that's how Kim Dok-Ja's last reading session began.」

Fin.

My thumb slowly extended and touched the cold screen.

Right at that moment, something like a spark danced just above the display.

[A new file has been downloaded.]

- Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (final revised version).txt
In that short time period, the name of the file had changed.

…The 'final revised version'?

I clicked on the file almost subconsciously.

But, why was this? The file had been scrolled almost all the way down to its bottom-most section from the get-go. It felt as if the edits had been finished only a few moments ago. Without thinking too much about it, I scrolled down even further.

Did the 'epilogue' of the 'Ways of Survival' get added at the end, the one I didn't get to read?

The file continued on from the point where the original novel came to an end. It was a story that I hadn't seen before.

I unconsciously began reading it out loud.

Epilogue 3. Author's words

Each regression turn would reach their conclusion in their own terms.

It was the same story for the 1863rd turn.

[You have cleared all the scenarios of .]

She did it. Countless sentences brushed past her head the moment she saw that message.

The 'Dokkaebi King' was collapsed on the ground before her eyes, and the companions from the 1863rd turn she had led were all here, too.

"Captain! We won!!"

Kim Nam-Woon was sobbing away nonstop. Only after spotting Yi Hyeon-Seong walking in closer to support her did it feel real to her, that she had finally done it.

「This was the end of the 1863rd turn.」

What a long battle it had been.

From when she of the 3rd turn was suddenly summoned to the 1863rd, all the way to greeting the suitable end of this world.

She nearly gave up several times in the middle, though. Even then, the reason why she didn't was because of what 'that idiot' said back then.

「"Going to the next scenario is better than sleeping forever."」

That idiot, who also came from the same 3rd turn as her.

The man who wore the same coat and used the same weapon as her.

「"The Apocalypse Dragon being freed doesn't mean everything's over. You know it too, don't you?"」

That idiot who ruined her plan, freed the Apocalypse Dragon, and eventually, managed to even eject Yu Jung-Hyeok from the scenario, too.

Even now, she could vividly recall the scenes from those moments by closing her eyes.

The scene of a 'Character' breaking past his story and gaining his freedom…

"Captain, we did it. We really did it!"

Yi Hyeon-Seong could barely hide his joy. Han Su-Yeong killed the lit cigarette in her hand and addressed him. "Support everyone and return to base."

"What about you, cap……?"

"I'll be right behind you after smoking one more. So, go on ahead."

"……We can't do that!"

…This slow dude, why was he so quick on the uptake now?

Han Su-Yeong glanced at the Archangel standing next to Yi Hyeon-Seong. "Jophiel."

The commander of the crimson cosmos, Jophiel, the Archangel that crossed to this world-line together with that idiot from the 3rd turn.

[Let's go, meat shield.]

"No, hang on a minute, captain!"

While lighting up her very last cigarette, Han Su-Yeong watched on as the Archangel took her companions back to Earth. The companions from the 'Ways of Survival' were getting further away. She saw how they kept shedding tears of satisfaction derived from successfully clearing all the scenarios and could only smile wryly.

Jophiel, her wings spread out wide, glanced in Han Su-Yeong's

direction as she grew further away.

- Are you planning to go alone?

Instead of a reply, Han Su-Yeong waved around her cigarette light.

And then, after all of her companions had disappeared, she slowly looked behind her.

「The Final Wall.」

The wall that blocked the end of this world-line, and also, recording everything found within this universe.

Han Su-Yeong was aware of this wall's existence, and not only that, she knew how to open it, too. She got to take a peek at a few scenes while connected to the 3rd turn's Han Su-Yeong, and more importantly, information she got from Kim Dok-Ja paying a visit to this world-line proved to be the crucial key, as well.

[The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' has discovered its intended position.]

Han Su-Yeong began slotting in the [Walls] she had gathered ahead of time into their spots.

[The 'Wall that Divides the Good and Evil' has discovered its intended position.]

[The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' has discovered its intended position.]

However, she was still short of one fragment.

Throughout the entirety of the universe, only one guy possessed this fragment – [The 4th Wall].

Han Su-Yeong silently stared at her own hand, before slowly placing it

against the last open spot on the wall.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling.]

She certainly didn't possess that [Wall].

Even then, shouldn't she be able to craft a fragment similar to that, somehow?

[Fable, 'Ultimate Lie' has begun its storytelling!]

Han Su-Yeong began squeezing out every Fable she could imagine.

She had witnessed the actual form of [The 4th Wall], just once. She definitely saw a portion of that wall when it blocked her attempt at using the [Eye of Truth].

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is being pushed to its absolute limit!]

Her fingers moved rapidly and began writing a Fable – a Fable of the wall that she came up with. The one single story that might be the basis of this wall.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut……!

「"I'm Dok-Ja."」

「Kim Dok-Ja(金獨子). My father wanted me to become a strong man even if I was left

alone so he gave me such a name.」

Right next moment, Han Su-Yeong's hand submerged into the wall.

Next up was her arm, shoulder, head, and her torso… And eventually, her entire figure sank into the wall.

[The 'Final Wall's system' is surprised by your Fable information

and……]

[Temporary error has occurred in the system!]

Han Su-Yeong fought back against the rising vomit and felt around the ground.

She did it.

She managed to infiltrate inside this stinking wall unscathed.

The first thing she saw after raising her head was a small room. There were quite a few bundles of packed luggage, and several small display panels decorating this place.

She was familiar with the Fable coming out from those panels.

「Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', has reached his ■■.」

「'Demon King of Salvation's' ■■ is 'Eternity'.」

That was the conclusion of the 3rd turn. That idiot had also cleared the scenario of his world-line to its very last, in other words. And at long last, he had decided to become this world's sole reader.

「In the world without the scenarios – filled with only the desire to see the next story…

A certain child, possessing a truly horrifying power of imagination.」

He'd continue to become smaller, and eventually become this world's subconsciousness.

And with that, he'd continue on with this neverending story.

The 1863rd turn's Han Su-Yeong could tell. If you ask her how she knew, well, she just did.

'Even I would've chosen that conclusion, after all.'

This world existed for the story.

Even Yu Jung-Hyeok's story, even Kim Dok-Ja's – in the end, they were all simply

'stories' marching forward towards the one true completion.

Han Su-Yeong stared at the subway train travelling further and further away inside the screen. For a long while, she wordlessly stared at this universe's god journeying towards the world that no one would ever remember.

And then, a few steps in front of her, there was a certain existence staring at the same screen while dabbing away its tears with a handkerchief.

[Hiii-eeek?!]

"So, then. You are the true 'Dokkaebi King' aren't you?"

[…How did you manage to enter this place?]

The Dokkaebi King her group definitely killed outside was standing completely fine before her eyes.

Han Su-Yeong unsheathed the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and asked. "I was wondering why you were so weak. Okay, so. Why didn't you fight us seriously? And what exactly have you been doing in here?"

[Uh-uh. Hang on a second. The scenarios are already over. I don't have any thoughts of fighting you.]

It was true, she couldn't sense any fighting intentions from the Dokkaebi King as it hurriedly waved both of its hands.

Its eyes gleamed as it observed the sparks faintly dancing around Han Su-Yeong's entire figure. Its irises were fixed on the [Final Wall] suffering from error.

[You repaired the 'Final Wall'……? What a shocking talent that is… Just who are you?

Your soul is… it's like the amalgamation of various talents.]

"What were you planning by using such a puppet? Are you looking down on this world-line?"

[Hu-hut, what do you mean, looking down? Every world-line is precious. It's just that…

This world-line has lost its meaning now. Its most important Fable had come to an end just now, after all.]

While saying that, the Dokkaebi King shifted his gaze back to the panels.

Han Su-Yeong quietly roused up her Fables, but the King simply snickered back at her.

[What are you getting so angry for? Regardless of what, the story of you and your group has concluded safely, didn't it?]

"Don't ever mess with this world-line's conclusion."

The moment she said that, the scenes from the 1863rd turn popped up on the panels.

Yi Hyeon-Seong and Kim Nam-Woon were supporting each other. The backs of her companions were captured in a wide-screen shot.

[Ah, of course, I won't. It's not even an important world-line, anyway……]

Han Su-Yeong saw how the Dokkaebi King shrugged its shoulders in total disinterest, and felt this powerful sense of futility.

Was this how the story of this regression turn ends?

Was it really okay to end it in this fashion?

[And besides… the new 'Most Ancient Dream' would not wish to see

such a thing happen, anyway.]

After hearing that, Han Su-Yeong looked up at the empty air above without even realising it.

The 'Most Ancient Dream'.

The 'Kim Dok-Ja' she knew had become one such existence.

Which meant that the current him might be looking at this spectacle, somehow.

[You think he will reply to you because you looked up like that? Your world has people who believe in their chosen deities. But, did those gods ever respond each and every

time their believers called out to them?]

"This and that aren't the same."

"Well… You can think of it any way you want. Anyways, this one would like to 'abscond'

from here, so can I leave now?]

"Where are you planning to go?"

[Since this world-line's story has ended, I should go to another place, don't you agree?

I've been working hard all this time, so… Well, there's this place I really wanted to visit since from a while ago, and……]

"Oh, so you wish to run away all the while abandoning the scenario, just like that?"

[Why didn't you get born in a world-line with an honest, hard-working Dokkaebi King, then?]

Han Su-Yeong frowned deeply and emitted waves of energy once more. "Hey. I clawed and fought my way to get here… So, shouldn't you give me some kind of a clear reward or something?"

The 'Dokkaebi King' spat out a long sigh. [Well, fine. Granting one wish shouldn't be so hard.]

"……I want to meet that idiot."

Almost immediately after saying it, Han Su-Yeong couldn't believe what she had done.

Why did she blurt that out, of all things?

「"Because, you are also there."」

「"I believe in 'you' of the 3rd turn, you see."」

She wasn't sure what this frustration in her heart meant.

Just that, meeting that guy again might help her understand what she felt so frustrated about, or so she thought.

The Dokkaebi King tilted his head. [When you say that idiot, you……]

Han Su-Yeong pointed to the panels with her chin.

The Dokkaebi King jumped up in shock and roared out. [Are you freaking blind or something?? That great one is no longer an existence the likes of me can ever meet.]

"I don't care if it's a version of him from another world-line. I also don't care even if he's a version who hasn't seen the end yet, too."

Kim Dok-Ja couldn't be seen anymore within the panels.

"I want to meet that idiot one more time."

[There is only one of him in this universe.]

Since the Dokkaebi King was being so adamant, it could only mean that her wish was truly impossible.

But then, the creature stared at the downhearted Han Su-Yeong and opened its mouth with a sly look on its face. [… Well, actually. There is a way to make your wish come true.]

"What was that?"

[Now normally, that world-line is forbidden from entry, but I've memorised its coordinates while the new 'Most Ancient Dream' was ascending to his position…

However, the 'Most Ancient Dream' in that place will not recognise you.]

Han Su-Yeong's expression brightened as she asked. "Where is that place?"

[It's the place I wanted to visit originally. I've always longed to go there at least once when this universe's great epic came to its conclusion, you see.]

While saying that, the Dokkaebi King raised both of its hands up high in the air. The aloof universe of was unfolding up there.

The Dokkaebi King looked up at that view with a solemn expression and addressed her. [Aren't you curious? Where did this universe start from, who crafted these intricate galaxies of Fables, who created this thing called 'scenario' in this world – just who is responsible for perfecting the world of pure contradictions where the result gives birth to the cause, and the cause becomes the result??]

Han Su-Yeong finally figured out the Dokkaebi King's true aim.

This guy, it was trying to head towards the world-line where this universe actually began.

「The world where the 'Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World' began.」

"You……!"

「The universe where tls123 was.」

[I'm going there to meet my god. If you want, I'll let you tag along on my journey!]

Tsu-chuchuchchut!

Along with the deafening roar, the storm of Probability's aftermaths powerfully rampaged between her and the Dokkaebi King. As she got sucked into this wall of pain akin to her soul being ripped into tiny shreds, she briefly caught the Dokkaebi King's grin.

[Let's meet again after making through this alive, shall we?]

That was the last memory Han Su-Yeong could remember of the 1863rd turn.

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"Heok!"

She shot up from her bed; the time was two in the morning. Her entire back was soaked in sweat. The second hand of the clock continued tick by.

…Was it all a dream?

Han Su-Yeong ungainly got up. The sensation of soft, luxurious duvet wrapped around her limbs – for some reason, this bed felt alien to her. She drank the water located on the bedside bureau, entered the adjoining bathroom and switched on the light. The orange lightbulb illuminated the darkness and her figure was reflected on the mirror.

Her neatly-trimmed hair that had grown all the way down to her shoulders. The beauty spot that seemed to get even more pronounced when she narrowed her eyes –

this was undoubtedly her own face. Indeed, it really was, yet…

“……What the hell??"

Suddenly, it felt as if her heart was tightening up.

[You have entered the 'First World-line'.]

She dashed outside the bathroom. Plastic figurines were displayed on the dressing table alongside the volumes of manga. She also spotted the familiar school bag next to the bed. Eventually, the darkness within this house no longer felt foreign to her. Her trembling hands opened the school bag, only for the textbooks within to tumble out.

Neatly-written words could be seen on the cover of one of those books.

- Han Su-Yeong, student no.2, classroom 2, sixth year.

Han Su-Yeong had become a 13-year-old girl.

Fin.

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She had suddenly become a sixth-year elementary school kid. How come?

For the remainder of dawn, Han Su-Yeong stewed in her stupefaction. Initially, she wondered if she had regressed like Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[Self-regulated activity period has concluded.]

[Next self-regulated activity period is scheduled to take place in around 14 hours.]

[The body's control has been rescinded.]

However, she got to figure out what happened to her after those messages floated up and she lost control of her own body.

[You can exercise the control only when the main body's ego has entered the sleep mode.]

She had taken possession of her own younger self.

‘…Could this be a new type of scenario?'

No matter how long she waited, though, stuff like scenario messages never popped up.

She 'watched' her younger self wake up with a dishevelled face, wash up, eat breakfast, and head off to school. She couldn't do anything else besides that.

And exactly 14 hours later, the following messages popped up.

[The main body's ego has fallen asleep.]

[Self-regulated activity will now begin.]

[Control of the body has been handed over to you.]

She'd stay as a dumb little 13-year-old kid during the daytime, while during the night, her body's control would revert to her like clockwork. And then, she'd start crying out in lamentation like this next.

“……What the hell am I supposed to do here?"

Her head was in a mess. If this was really the 'First World-line', her actions of now could influence the rest of the world-lines yet to be born in the future.

After sucking in deep breaths, she decided to first check out the situation she was in.

Expensive but simple furniture filled this three-bedroom-plus-living-room house. Han Su-Yeong was quite familiar with it.

The housekeeper that came to work early every morning, the lazy guard that monitored all visitors, and her parents that came to visit her on the weekends in alternating turns while being driven on new cars every time.

Her father was a National Assembly member, while mother was an actress. Han Su-Yeong never thought of them as her family, though.

The world didn't know of her existence. And her so-called parents, they probably didn't want her existence to be revealed to the world, either.

“……It's really the same."

Han Su-Yeong browsed through the pile of books on top of the desk belonging to her 13-year-old self. Some were books she really liked, while some, she couldn't even recognise. The faint, blurry memories must be held in possession by her other self. In any case, it was crystal clear that she had read them all judging by the hand stains left on the books.

「To each and everyone, a life that's only theirs exists.」

She saw a line drawn under some throwaway quote and felt a chill creep down her skin. Such unimpressive sentences piled up and would eventually go on to become the human Han Su-Yeong. Probably.

It was then that he heard a sound of doorbell going off.

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…At this late hour?

She hurriedly pressed the intercom button to confirm. At first, she wondered if it was the guard, but when she took a closer look at the intercom screen, he had been already knocked out cold. And a middle-aged man wearing a fedora was smiling in her direction and waving his hand.

- It's me, Dokkaebi King.

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"Why do you look like that?"

"When I arrived here, I suddenly morphed into a human being. I'm almost fully stripped of my system authority, too…… But, why have you become so much younger?"

"You made me like this, didn't you?"

"I certainly did not. The influence of the great Probability has… Actually, forgive me for this intrusion."

Han Su-Yeong groaned and guided the Dokkaebi King inside the house.

"Do you live alone?" It asked her.

"I do."

"You seem to have some spare rooms."

“……I'm telling you this now, don't expect me to put you up in here."

The Dokkaebi King pouted in disappointment from that.

Han Su-Yeong boiled a simple teabag and brought it out, then asked her guest. "Okay.

What is your reason for bringing me to this world-line?"

"We shall go and search for the 'creator' together."

"How?"

"That's something we should think about from here on."

"You came here without any preparations or knowing anything?"

"Of course not. I do have my suspicions. For instance, that novel."

Han Su-Yeong's expression hardened. As expected, it seemed that the Dokkaebi King had been aware of the existence of 'Ways of Survival.'

"The author of that novel is probably the 'god' that constructed this universe," said the Dokkaebi King.

tls123.

The author who wrote 'Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World'.

Han Su-Yeong sighed softly, and fetched her notebook PC. "I've already tried to search for it, though."

- There are no matching results.

"That novel, it hasn't been uploaded yet."

“……Hmm. Maybe something had gone wrong somewhere?"

"No, it's more like we came here too early. I'm pretty sure that the serialisation will start this year."

"How do you know that?"

"If what I heard is right, the first time Kim Dok-Ja read this novel was when he was 15.

I'm 13 right now, so he must be 15."

She recalled a certain crumpled memo pad Kim Dok-Ja gave to her in the past. He must've been in a rush, but he still managed to write down all sorts of information on that little thing.

"That great one is 15 years old, is it… Something's rather cute……”

"I'm more curious about something else, though."

"Such as?"

"What will happen if the 'Ways of Survival' doesn't appear in this world?"

"Excuse me?" The Dokkaebi King stumbled a little from her question before speaking up. "Hmm… If that happens, then the great one won't get to read the novel."

"Since he won't get to read it, that naturally means the 'Ways of Survival' won't become reality either, right?"

“……That might be plausible. At the very least, the 'apocalypse' might not get triggered for the world-lines about to be branched off from here."

In that case, if they could prevent Kim Dok-Ja from reading the 'Ways

of Survival', then that meant they could potentially stop the apocalypse of this world-line, too.

"I think I get the general gist of your idea. Are you trying to stop the serialisation of the 'Ways of Survival'?" The Dokkaebi King asked.

"That's right."

Han Su-Yeong nodded her head. As long as this tls123 was not a supernatural existence, she might be able to prevent the destruction of this world with her powers alone.

But then, the Dokkaebi King tackled her down verbally. "Yours is indeed an intriguing idea. However, you don't even know who the author is……"

"Have you ever read that novel before?"

"No, I haven't. Have you?"

"Yeah." Han Su-Yeong pondered something for a little bit before continuing on. "That novel, it's really badly written."

"…"

"From the very beginning, it's filled with way too much exposition, while the chapter lengths are all over the place, and the work doesn't even try to accommodate its potential readers. Only Kim Dok-Ja alone managed to read it from start to finish."

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"Hoh. As expected of the great……"

"You think such a thing even makes sense?"

The Dokkaebi King narrowed its eyes as if to ask, what are you talking about.

Han Su-Yeong continued on. "An author who doesn't read his own novel? Someone like that doesn't exist. And because of the unique traits of a webnovel platform, you can never perfectly fix anything, so you don't have a choice but to re-read your uploaded chapters several times even if to check for typos and stuff. But then…… past the 100th chapter, the view count became just 'one' for the remainder of that novel."

Only then did the Dokkaebi King's eyes widened, as if it finally understood what she was saying. "Could it be……?"

"It is. The author of the 'Ways of Survival' that I think is none other than that idiot. I don't know why he's denying being the author even after writing it himself, but I'm sure about this."

One of her old habits was to leave a blank Korean word processor page displayed on her notebook. While looking at the blinking cursor, she spoke up. "We need to find Kim Dok-Ja. Before he starts that damn 'Ways of Survival'."

*

The problem was with how to find that 'Kim Dok-Ja'.

"Do you know where he lives? I no longer have the power of the system, so we need to personally locate him," said the Dokkaebi King.

"I'm sure he's somewhere around Seoul."

"……Don't you know any other distinguishing traits of his?"

"He's probably hiding somewhere, busy reading fantasy novels or something……"

"How are we even supposed to find him with such information??"

"Argh, I don't know. It's your job to come up with something. I'm only an elementary school kid, you know."

After saying that, Han Su-Yeong blacked out immediately. When she came to, the Dokkaebi King must've gone somewhere, as it was nowhere to be found.

“……This was why I always dozed off back in school."

She always wondered why she felt so sleepy whenever she got to school… As it turned, her condition was due to another ego waking up and doing its own thing during the night time.

Since waiting for the Dokkaebi King proved to be rather boring, Han Su-Yeong did what she could during the early hours of the morning.

Most of that was browsing through various blogs.

"That guy, I'm pretty sure he was a blogger……”

And when even that became too boring, she created a secret folder in the notebook and started writing novels. Most of them were simple 'minifictions' written solely for the purpose of keeping her writer's sense sharp. However, something truly strange happened the next day she completed them. Her 13-year-old ego active during the daytime ended up causing a big event.

"Su-Yeong-ah, since when did you learn to write so well?"

The school suddenly hosted a writing contest and she won the top prize. Not only that, the content of her writing was exactly the same as the minifiction she cobbled together during the early hours, too.

"Just, you know, it came flooding out," her 13-year-old self replied.

Han Su-Yeong looked back, and recalled that people began saying she had a talent for writing around the time she was 13 or so. With here as the starting point, she would earnestly walk on the path of the full-fledged writer.

And so, a month passed by like that, then yet another one.

Han Su-Yeong grew rather invested in spectating her 13-year-old self living her life.

As for the 15-year-old Kim Dok-Ja, he too must be living somewhere in this world.

When she thought about that, she felt happy for some reason.

What should she first say to that unlucky idiot when they eventually get to meet each other?

Time went by pretty quickly – September flew by, and it soon became October.

Every now and then, her parents would stop by to leave behind presents she didn't want, and went away again.

Finally, it was December. It was around here that Han Su-Yeong began to realise something didn't feel right.

- There are no matching results.

Why didn't tls123 start his serialisation already? Did she do something wrong and that changed the future? But, that couldn't be possible. She hadn't even met Kim Dok-Ja yet.

…What would happen if the 'Ways of Survival' is not serialised this year?

Would this world continue to exist without the 'Ways of Survival'?

Maybe that wouldn't be such a bad world, in a way.

If the 'Ways of Survival' didn't exist, then this world wouldn't have to greet its apocalypse, either. If so…

It was then she heard the phone go off.

She figured it must've been her parents again, but when she picked up the receiver…

- I've found him.

"What? Where? N-no, hang on. Where are you now?"

Her heart began pounding away.

Kim Dok-Ja had been found. Finally.

However, the next set of words was something that not even her [Predictive Plagiarism]

could have predicted.

- I'm currently, well… I'm in the place called a hospital's emergency ward."

*

Han Su-Yeong avoided the guard's eyes and climbed aboard an early-hours taxi cab.

The hospital itself wasn't too far. Doctors and nurses were busily going about their businesses despite the hour being what it was. Screams of pain from the patients intermittently rang out. And empty beds were deeply permeated with the lengthy tendrils of death's scent.

Even in a world without scenarios, people continued to die.

These were very small apocalypses. This was where lives not recorded went to disappear.

Han Su-Yeong, currently half in a daze, scanned all the stretchers.

"Ah…"

And that's how she found the 15-year-old Kim Dok-Ja lying on one. His face, deeply sunken and pale. An IV needle was stuck in the boy's wrist wrapped tightly in bandages.

"I'm telling you, it's not our fault! In his school, he……!"

That came from a face not closely resembling Kim Dok-Ja's. A married

couple, seemingly cousins once removed from the unconscious boy, were shouting at a doctor in clear bouts of irritation.

Han Su-Yeong stared at them, before demanding an answer from the Dokkaebi King.

"How did this guy end up like this?"

"Apparently, he jumped out of the classroom window."

Han Su-Yeong slowly reached out and checked Kim Dok-Ja's current condition. Crude cast and bandages wrapped around his body. Swollen bruises all over his face. His arm where not one solid muscle could be felt lay powerlessly on the bed.

Han Su-Yeong held the boy's hand.

It was as small as her own.

"Do… Do something," she muttered out.

"Please don't worry. These aren't fatal wounds. Thankfully, the classroom floor wasn't high, and he collided with a tree on his way down, so……"

"That's not what I meant!"

The married couple walking in closer from the distance could be seen. They must've discovered Han Su-Yeong, since they seemed to be shouting something or rather in her direction.

However, their voices didn't register in her brain.

Just why…

「"If it weren't for that novel, I'd probably have died back then."」

She wasn't sure if this was her own memory, or the 3rd turn's.

「"You, you. You and your exaggerations."」

「"I'm telling you the truth."」

Ancient, creaky memories rushed in like tidal waves while hiding within all the ringing noises in her head. The Dokkaebi King supported her and they left the hospital. She saw the medical staff and the paramedics hurriedly moving the new patient into the emergency ward.

"We managed to find him somehow, didn't we?"

"…"

"Now that I've seen him personally, it was true all along. Did you sense that incredible aura coming out from his entire figure? And now, as soon as he opens his own world, then……"

As if it was looking forward to the apocalypse soon to visit this world-line, the Dokkaebi King continued to yap on and on.

Han Su-Yeong muttered out as she stumbled ungainly. "Kim Dok-Ja said he read that

novel when he was fifteen."

"Yes. So, soon it……"

"What if he didn't get to read that novel… What will happen to him?"

"Pardon?"

If the 'Ways of Survival' didn't start, then this world would not be destroyed.

However, what would happen to Kim Dok-Ja, instead?

"Uhm, hello?"

"……”

"Are you actually crying?"

Kim Dok-Ja's tragedy was a rather common one. If only a small number of gazes fell upon him, if only just a tiny little bit of goodwill was shown his way, then it'd have been easily overcome. However, he couldn't exactly expect those small gazes or goodwill in the situation he found himself in.

Realistically speaking, could a 13-year-old elementary school kid be able to save anyone? One who can barely regain her self only during early hours, no less?

"But, why are you crying?"

That didn't mean she could entrust it to this Dokkaebi King, either.

Not only did it speak weirdly, but it also couldn't use the system, and its character couldn't even be trusted, so how could she expect such a bum of a Dokkaebi to…

Han Su-Yeong dazedly stared at her own hands.

「"That novel saved me. So, I should pay my debt to its protagonist."」

The way to… save Kim Dok-Ja.

"Hey, you have any money on you?"

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"Pardon?"

"Give me five thousand, no, ten thousand Won."

Han Su-Yeong quickly snatched the Dokkaebi King's cash and rushed towards the nearby PC Bang.

The latter screamed and chased after her. "That's all the money I have!"

She sneaked past the PC Bang's owner dozing off, stole a charge card, logged into an unused computer, and clicked on the internet browser. She typed in the address of the webnovel platform she always connected to, and searched for a certain author's name again.

- There are no matching results.

Even now, tls123 hadn't shown up yet.

The end of the year was fast approaching, yet the serialisation hadn't started yet.

Han Su-Yeong quietly glared at the monitor for a little while, before clicking on the platform's [members registration] icon.

She didn't know who tls123 was. However, if tls123 was, at least, not Kim Dok-Ja – if the author of that damn novel was someone else, then…

- The applicable username is currently not in use. Would you like to use this username?

Perhaps it didn't really matter who it was?

Her hand gripping the mouse was trembling hard.

The tragedy's button rested against the tip of her finger. If she clicked it, then… the apocalypse of countless world-lines would begin.

However, if she didn't press it…

- Yes.

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…The 'small world' she witnessed would disappear.

- Dear tls123-nim. Congratulations on your registration!

Han Su-Yeong confirmed the remaining time.

[Three hours remaining in the self-regulated activity period.]

[Once the main ego wakes up, your control will forcibly be rescinded.]

She opened up the word processor and began typing away immediately. As if she was unspooling a manuscript stuck inside her head for the longest time ever, her fingers continued to move in a brilliant fashion. She showed not a single error in her typing.

Her exquisite sentences that seemingly carved out a world in its entirety. However, arrangements that lacked any consideration towards the potential reader, and expositions that had no immersive devices to speak of. She typed, and typed some more, of this boring story.

All the while expecting that…

…Without a doubt, one person would definitely get to read this story.

「This is a lie.」

Countless worlds were destroyed by her hands.

And countless characters died because of her.

「At least, until it can become the truth.」

All the possibilities that her [Predictive Plagiarism] could guess were overflowing inside her head. Some of them became the narrative, while some others became expositions.

And so, how long passed by like that? Han Su-Yeong's fingers eventually came to a stop.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok stood before the vast, endless calamity pouncing on him and spoke.」

It was not possible to figure out every facet of the story through the [Predictive

Plagiarism].

「"Until I witness the end of the scenario, I shall never give up. That's why…"」

She wasn't sure whether Yu Jung-Hyeok really said something like that or not.

Because, all of this was from her imagination, after all. Because, she had created everything. That's why she wanted to write these very words. Even if by borrowing Yu Jung-Hyeok's mouth, she wanted to write these words and put them in there.

「"You shouldn't give up, either."」

Han Su-Yeong panted breathlessly and slowly raised her head. When she looked behind her, she discovered the Dokkaebi King staring at the computer's screen with an enraptured expression.

"Hey, Dokkaebi King?"

The creature slowly knelt down before her and waited for her next words.

"……I'm going to sleep."

[You have spent too much of your mental power during a short period of time!]

[Your ego will become subconsciousness, and…]

…

……

……

When she regained her consciousness, she was lying on her own bed.

It was midnight. It seemed that a full day's cycle went by after she blacked out.

'…Goddammit, what the hell did I do that for?'

While holding her head, Han Su-Yeong got up from the bed. The blue wallpaper of the notebook PC resting on the desk caught her eye. She launched the internet browser without thinking too much about it and connected to the webnovel platform.

Several comments had already popped up on her story she uploaded last night. Most of them were crappy, toxic comments about how 'no jam' it was, or how it was too obsessed with expositions and stuff.

"I quickly wrote that in mere two hours, so obviously…… Besides, I was trying my best to be as close to the 'Ways of Survival', you know??"

Among all those comments, a particular one caught her attention.

- Dear author-nim. It was a great read. May I ask about your release schedule?

Such an unparalleled naivete that made him use his real name as the username. Han Su-Yeong stared at that name for a long, long time. She looked closer, and discovered another comment attached to it.

- Are you… going to release another chapter tomorrow?

She repeatedly clenched and unfurled her fists many times. Sweat was soaking her small hands.

Is it really okay for me to write this?

Even then, isn't it fine this way?

Han Su-Yeong hesitated for a long time, before typing her reply.

While thinking about a certain someone, still alive beyond this screen.

While thinking about a certain boy who'd breathe, eat, shout some nonsense about

'I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok', and do whatever it takes to endure his own apocalypse.

And so, the story of a regressor that reached 3149 chapters started in this manner.

- Yes. A new chapter will be published tomorrow.

Fin.

Han Su-Yeong continued to write.

The short period of time given to her during the wee hours was completely devoted to Kim Dok-Ja.

"Hey, Dokkaebi King."

"Yes, my dear god."

“……I told you to stop calling me that. Anyways. The 'Ways of Survival' will be published seven in the evenings from now on. The website doesn't have the feature to schedule the chapter releases ahead of time yet, so you hold onto the manuscript and upload them on time for me. If I upload them during dawn, that kid is going to stay up late and wait. He won't get any sleep."

"I shall do as you command."

Han Su-Yeong spat out a lengthy groan and shifted her gaze back to the manuscript she'd been working on.

「Yu Jung-Hyeok examined the events of the previous regression turn.」

She couldn't possibly write a life that lasted for 1863rd regression turns. 3149

chapters were simply too short to contain a life lived for 1864 times. She had to omit some regression turns, while some others had to be greatly reduced in length.

She knew that life didn't really work that way. But at the same time, she had to acknowledge that some lives could only be written in such a manner. Once she came to accept that, writing those lives didn't prove to be too difficult for her.

The life of 1863rd turn Yu Jung-Hyeok was given to her in its entirety, while she also possessed information from the 3rd turn Kim Dok-Ja, as well. Most importantly, though, she was an excellent writer.

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The margins she couldn't fill up, they would instead be lived out by Yu Jung-Hyeok himself.

Yu Jung-Hyeok, who'd take his breaths among the flowing contexts of the words, and step above the hard ground covered by the pitch-black letters.

All she could do was to deliver such Yu Jung-Hyeok's story.

Every time she wrote a single chapter, Kim Dok-Ja's life was extended by yet another day. As one sentence after another was compiled and recorded, her own time also ticked forward little by little.

The 13-year-old Han Su-Yeong became 14. Then, 15 years old.

「A serialisation that would last for ten long, arduous years had begun.」

It was tough. She didn't have enough stamina, and her young body was simply too frail.

Even then, Han Su-Yeong endured. She thought about Kim Dok-Ja beyond the computer screen, also getting older like her. Kim Dok-Ja, who hadn't died, hadn't given up, and was still enduring his life.

- Dear author-nim, Today, Jung-Hyeok did…

Are you really enjoying a story like this?

Although half in doubt, Han Su-Yeong still continued to write the story.

「"The information I gave you will come in handy later down the line. So, take a look whenever you have time."」

The story would not end as long as someone was reading it.

That's how it was with the 1863rd regression turn, once thought to be the last.

- Author-nim. I've been thinking, how about creating a new character by using this opportunity……?

She checked the comments Kim Dok-Ja left behind every day. As she was active only around the early hours, communicating with him in real-time was difficult, but she did reply to the questions that seemingly required one.

- Should I create another main character?

- If possible, might as well as make her a pretty female character…

- Aha, you mean a beautiful young girl.

「Facial features more than enough to slap Yu Jung-Hyeok's cheeks twice. A beautiful young boy with brilliant blonde locks glared at Yu Jung-Hyeok and shouted out. "Hey you, dumpling man."」

-… But, author-nim??

Kim Dok-Ja, 16 years old. 17, 18.

He'd consume this story and grow older, and eventually, become the 'Most Ancient Dream'. Despite knowing that fact, Han Su-Yeong still enjoyed this time period. A world of a pure-white snowfield where letters were wandering around freely. Above this world existed Kim Dok-Ja, and so did Han Su-Yeong.

- Author-nim. I was wondering if Jung-Hyeok-ee is suffering way too much lately…

Sometimes, she'd put Yu Jung-Hyeok through the wringer. It only happened because of her desire to realistically copy and paste the story she already knew. While writing the novel in this manner, she'd fall into a pit of confusion every now and then.

Did this event really happen in the past?

Couldn't it be more like, it happened because I wrote this?

Whatever the truth was, she still gave it her all. She took pride in her work. But at the same time, she had to admit that it was impossible for her to completely rule over her own work.

「With a pair of seething, boiling eyes, Yu Jung-Hyeok glared up into the heavens.」

Sometime in the future, Yu Jung-Hyeok created by the tips of her hands would meet that Kim Dok-Ja for real. Just thinking about that event nearly made her go crazy from time to time.

- Unprecedented hit novel! 「「SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor」」!

Around that time, the 'daytime ego' began working as an author in earnest, as well. Of course, she had stolen the nighttime Han Su-Yeong's talents wholesale, so there was no way that her novel would fail. Not only that, the 'daytime ego' even went to the trouble of creating an anonymous account to leave behind a toxic comment on the

'Ways of Survival', too.

- I'm really worried about the life of the dear author-nim actually writing this junk.

…What was even more flabbergast-inducing was Kim Dok-Ja's DM.

- Author-nim! Do know about the novel called SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor? That novel's setting is exactly the same as the Ways of…

Han Su-Yeong smirked and began typing her reply. She thought, right, the dude writing a DM like this accused me of being a plagiarist during the 1863rd turn, did you?

- I'm happy that my viewcount has gone up thanks to the exposure, actually.

When she was finished typing the reply, the faint rays of the daybreak had cast onto the world outside the window. Starting from a while ago, she didn't feel refreshed even after waking up. She'd often use up all of her allotted time on writing the novel, and there were times when she couldn't endure the fatigue anymore and fall asleep despite the self-regulated activity period not having ended yet.

To make matters worse, her memories were gradually deteriorating, as well.

Information she heard from Yu Jung-Hyeok, and received from Kim

Dok-Ja – she couldn't recall them well. Things that happened back in the 1863rd turn were getting blurrier. And also…

[Your Fable is being consumed.]

Even the length of her self-regulated activity period was decreasing gradually.

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The time continued to tick by, and Han Su-Yeong continued to write almost every day.

At times, she couldn't wake up and ended up wasting an entire day. And due to the worsening fatigue, the number of days she couldn't read Kim Dok-Ja's comments

increased as well.

- Author-nim. I'll be joining the military the day after tomorrow. Looks like I'll be sent to the frontlines.

- It's Kim Dok-Ja. I'm here at Yanggu.

- Jung-Hyeok-ah… I wonder, have you ever shovelled snow before?

20 years old, 21, 22…

371st turn, 621st, 972nd…

As Yu Jung-Hyeok's regression turn numbers grew higher, so did Kim Dok-Ja's age. Kim Dok-Ja feeding on Yu Jung-Hyeok's tragedy became a high school student, then a university student and eventually, a soldier.

Han Su-Yeong observed the growth of such a man.

Her free time decreased even more as the 'daytime ego', now an adult

herself, began staying up during the dawn as well. As the time to polish up the novel gradually dissipated, the Dokkaebi King's role also naturally grew much more substantial.

"Please don't worry. I shall fix all the errors," said the Dokkaebi King.

"Do you even know anything about grammar?"

"Yes, I do. I'm planning to earn my living that way. A publisher was looking for a part-time proofreader, so I confidently applied for the position."

This guy still came across as somewhat unreliable, but she couldn't get anyone else to help her, anyway. She definitely couldn't get the help from the 'daytime ego', for instance. A lot of her strength had been exhausted and her forgetfulness had worsened greatly in recent times so it took a lot out of her just to post a reply to Kim Dok-Ja's comments.

「And just like that, a few more years went by like fleeting magic.」

While writing that sentence, Han Su-Yeong thought that her life wasn't all that different from Yu Jung-Hyeok's, in some ways.

Sometimes, a life really did get omitted like this. However, that didn't mean a life omitted as such left nothing of itself behind, either. That's what she thought while staring at the novel numbering over 3000 chapters currently compiled before her eyes.

On a certain day before the completion, Han Su-Yeong opened up the platform's chat window in order to write a comment as usual.

- Please don't give up, dear reader-nim.

…Did I post a comment like this before?

Initially, she figured this was a result of her typing some random

things while half-submerged in drowsiness. However, there was more than one post that she couldn't remember ever posting here.

- To answer your question…

Just when did she post such replies before? No matter how hard she thought about it, she couldn't recall. Not only that, the timestamps of the posts were weird, as well.

- Actually, rather than a mistake in the setting, it's…

Han Su-Yeong summoned the Dokkaebi King right away. When she did, the creature wearing a fedora appeared from the thin air accompanied by the 'Tsu-chuchut!' noise.

She asked. "Did you write this?"

"Yes."

"On whose authority?"

"I sincerely apologise for not getting your permission beforehand. You seemed very tired lately."

Han Su-Yeong quietly stared at the Dokkaebi King.

This creature came to this world searching for its 'god'. And it now knew who its creator was.

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"Just what are you aiming for?"

"I am merely a 'storyteller'. And as it is with every storyteller, I love to tell a great epic.

The world you have created, of course."

"There is only one reader of this story, though."

"Do you really believe so?"

She narrowed her eyes and shot back. "I already know what you're scheming, okay?

You're planning to turn my novel into a 'paid service', aren't you?"

Ever since arriving in this world, she constantly thought about 'that day'.

The novel she wrote would become the 'scenario' that would go on to destroy this universe. However, who would dare to do something so horrifying like that? The answer was quite simple when she thought about it.

There was only one existence capable of doing something like that in this world-line, after all.

"You brought me here for that very purpose, didn't you?"

"I won't deny that. Even though it hadn't been long since I realised what my true role was."

Faint sparks were dancing all over the Dokkaebi King's body. That was the evidence of the system's Probability growing stronger. Also, it meant that this Dokkaebi was gradually regaining the power of the King of the storytellers.

Han Su-Yeong stared at the dancing sparks before speaking up. "…… So, then. The apocalypse will really begin, is that it?"

"Yes."

"Honestly, I don't get it at all. You know the chronological sequence doesn't make sense, either."

“……The chronological sequence?"

"The only reason why I can write this is because Yu Jung-Hyeok will live his life in the future, and Kim Dok-Ja had read the novel. But for me to write a novel that Kim DokJa will read, that's……"

"……The time paradox. That's what humans call this. However, there are universes that do operate on that principle. A universe where the future is written before the past, and the cause is created for the purpose of the end result. I'm sure you're already familiar with such a universe?"

Han Su-Yeong frowned as if to ask, what on earth are you talking about?

The Dokkaebi King grinned and lightly tapped the computer monitor. "Aren't you currently writing one?"

The stray thoughts and fragments of letters she had thrown around could be found in there.

Countless scenes existing outside the time itself, outside the world, waiting to be connected as one. Some scenes became futures despite being written earlier, while some scenes, despite being written later, became the past. Han Su-Yeong's eyes trembled. "…… Are you saying this whole universe is just a novel?"

"If I am to compare it, then yes, something like that."

The letters within the screen seemed to ripple. Letters wishing to be loved by someone were flowing outside the monitor after forming pairs and groups with each other.

Sentences, that sparkled like the stars.

Some sentences willingly became the darkness for other sentences, while a certain sentence became light only through those dark words. Some sentences existed for the next sentence, while the next sentence gained its meaning because the first sentence existed.

"There is no 'before and after' in this universe. And that is precisely the reason why the 'First World-line' is being completed very last." Within this giant, endlessly connecting chain, the Dokkaebi King was smiling rapturously. "The universe was created just now, but at the same time, it has existed for the past billions of years, as well. And a certain beginning only appears after the apocalypse has commenced."

Sentences cascaded like a meteor shower.

was singing towards its god.

Because Han Su-Yeong wrote the Ways of Survival, Kim Dok-Ja got to read it.

Because Kim Dok-Ja read the Ways of Survival, Yu Jung-Hyeok began his regression.

Because Yu Jung-Hyeok began his regression, Han Su-Yeong was able to write the

'Ways of Survival.'

She might have written them, but these words were completed only after leaving her hands.

「The story that would save someone, destroy, and help him live.」

Han Su-Yeong stared at the horrifying trajectory drawn out by those words and became acutely aware of the fact that she had been thrown into this neverending cycle.

She might be the author responsible for creating this world, but she was also a powerless god. A god that couldn't even save a single reader. A god who was simply a part of this vast, boundless story.

[is smiling in your direction.]

"Now, behold. Isn't this a truly perfect story?"

Fin.

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[is looking at its creator.]

Her eyelids soaked in fatigue slowly closed. As she drifted into the languid sea of unconsciousness, Han Su-Yeong listened to the Dokkaebi King's voice.

"Please, rest now and sleep, my noble god."

And on the next day, the 'Ways of Survival's' final chapter was completed.

*

「…… Three ways to survive. I've forgotten a few. But one thing's for certain. That is…… 」

After she finished typing the very last sentence, Han Su-Yeong kept her eyes closed for a very long time. She knew a day like this would eventually come. But now that it was finally here, it didn't feel real to her at all.

Her lengthy serialisation had finally come to an end.

When she slowly looked behind, the Dokkaebi King was standing there just as she suspected. With a pair of deeply-moved eyes, it was staring at the computer monitor.

"Hey, you," said Han Su-Yeong.

"Yes, my god."

"Can't you, like, not do the paid service?"

"Dear god-nim, even if I don't, the story will commence regardless."

Han Su-Yeong could only smile bitterly at the Dokkaebi King speaking like a stubborn devotee.

The daylight was breaking outside the windows. The sun would rise, and when it was time to set again, the apocalypse would come to visit this world.

「And then, Kim Dok-Ja's story will begin.」

“……And I'm destined to disappear, right?"

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut……

Her Fable, what little remained of it, wiggled slightly. There were some stories that might not seem all that excellent or special, but still required an untold sacrifice to complete. To her, the 'Ways of Survival' was one such novel.

[Your existential Fable is in a precarious state.]

If the future about to unfold was correct, her ego would soon disappear into the main body's vast, boundless subconsciousness. And only after the main body learns the

[Avatar] skill would she be reborn with a tiny bit of the old memories. And then, get to live the 1863rd regression turn.

「If that's indeed the case, what did my life exist for?」

Han Su-Yeong dazedly approached the window. The light grew brighter beyond the pale-naked skies, and the stars were receding away.

[[Everything has already been written, and at the same time, still being written.]]

The 'Outer God' who sent her to the 1863rd turn said that to her. A universe of repeating cycle. And in this universe, the result birthed the cause, and the cause would eventually become the result.

In order to create a complete story, the result rejected the cause, while the cause devoured the result in order to exist. The moment she understood that vast, mysterious rule, Han Su-Yeong began thinking that this world resembled a chessboard. A chessboard that pursued the highest degree of completion, ruled by a certain gigantic 'will' with an unknown origin and form.

Even if she was the creator of the apocalyptic scenario, wasn't she merely another chess piece, a 'knight', in this chessboard of the universe?

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While sensing the waves of sleepiness crashing in, she slowly got up from her seat.

[Your mental power has reached its limit!]

Han Su-Yeong fought against the horrifying level of tiredness, fumbled around to put on some clothes, and left her room. The hour was still very early, but the people waking up early should be getting ready to go to work round about now. The Dokkaebi King was following after her.

She addressed the King while not even bothering to look back. "You worked hard trying to edit the novel until now."

"If you go outside, you'll die."

She already knew that. Because, the sun was rising.

Han Su-Yeong looked up at the break of dawn and spoke. "My role's already finished, anyway. You'll take care of the rest from now on, right? It'll be the end when you hand over the text file to him on the designated time. I wrote that revised version too, the one we talked

about, just in case. But… that's incomplete, so you decide what to do later."

"But……"

"It's been over ten years." Han Su-Yeong glared at the Dokkaebi King several hand-spans taller than her. "Can't I do what I want at least once?"

The reason why she came to this world – it was to meet Kim Dok-Ja she ran into back in the 1863rd turn one more time.

She leisurely warmed her muscles, and started jogging.

「Han Su-Yeong imagined Kim Dok-Ja, on his way to work at Mino Soft.」

She heard news from the Dokkaebi King every now and then, and there were also the comments Kim Dok-Ja himself had written. And that's how she knew a lot about him.

- Author-nim! I'll be living by myself starting this year!

- I'm now living near this place. And it's really weird reading about it in a novel.

- Have you heard about Mino Soft? It'd be nice if your novel gets a game version, too.

Maybe I should suggest it to the…

She knew when he became independent from his tragedy, and from where he started dealing with yet another tragedy. And also, in what shape or form this new tragedy appeared as.

[The main body's ego is trying to wake up from her dream!]

[Warning! Your self-regulated activity period has ended!]

[Further exercising of control will cause your ego to……]

Han Su-Yeong ignored the messages and continued to run. She ran, and ran again until she could barely breathe. She ran hard, the words Kim Dok-Ja wrote the only things occupying her thoughts.

- Author-nim. I don't remember how many times I've said this before, but…

Those words… she'd forget them all.

[Your actions are in serious violation of the Probability.]

She'd forget the memories of the 1863rd turn.

And she'd also forget the fact that she wrote a certain novel, as well.

[Your Fable is disappearing.]

She'd forget that a story existed just for its sole reader.

However, even then, even if she forgot everything……

「Han Su-Yeong's running slowly came to a halt.」

There he was. A man who existed only as texts for a long, long time ever since that day she last saw him in the hospital's emergency ward.

「In the distance, Kim Dok-Ja was walking forward.」

That was the exact same face of Kim Dok-Ja she remembered.

The man who came to her 1863rd regression turn. The man who she wanted to see again. The detestable man with his own brand of ass-kissing. The man who lied really easily. The man who she enjoyed being around, since they could lie about something together and

snicker among themselves.

"----"

The man, who didn't remember her.

"----!!"

Her voice didn't want to come out. She couldn't tell whether it was because she was choking up, or the control of her body was slipping away from her.

Han Su-Yeong staggered and walked closer to Kim Dok-Ja. Several passersby brushing past her looked back in suspicion.

Kim Dok-Ja was now walking down the subway's steps.

Kim Dok-Ja, with earphones stuck in his ears and reading something on his phone while walking downstairs.

She knew what he was currently reading.

"---!!"

She barely managed to shout, but her voice still didn't come out. So, she desperately chased after him.

- Because of the story you wrote, author-nim, I was able to survive until now.

Han Su-Yeong was also able to survive while reading the sole reader's words.

She managed to write the next part of Yu Jung-Hyeok's life through them.

She was able to endure her boring and stuffy teen years, the days she never wanted to go back to, thanks to those words.

- This train is bound for…

She spotted Kim Dok-Ja standing on the platform, waiting for the next train to arrive.

A person hiding within the small world crafted out of letters to protect himself was standing right there.

Kim Dok-Ja, who didn't know anything about the apocalypse about to happen.

Kim Dok-Ja, who'd get to live on the expansive world of the 'Ways of Survival'.

Kim Dok-Ja, who'd get to meet the protagonist he so longed to become.

Kim Dok-Ja, who'd become the 'Demon King of Salvation'.

Kim Dok-Ja, who'd sacrifice himself multiple times for the sake of his companions, and as a result, came to the 1863rd turn and met her.

Kim Dok-Ja, who was destined to become the 'Most Ancient Dream', the price he paid for loving a certain story too much.

[Your mental state is crumbling!]

[The main body's ego is regaining its control.]

[Your Fable is being extinguished.]

Her legs grew heavy, and her arms didn't want to move anymore. Her body was gradually becoming not hers.

Even then, Han Su-Yeong wanted to tell him.

「To tell him that he was definitely not at fault for this story being born. And to tell him that the things he was about to experience were not his sins.」

Because, her past 13 years existed solely to say those words to him.

「To say that, though you have grown up while reading this story, there's no need for you to become it.」

She barely managed to reach out, the tips of her hand touching Kim Dok-Ja's shoulder.

[Your ego will convert into the 'subconsciousness'.]

Kim Dok-Ja felt that sensation of touch on his shoulder and looked behind him.

However, the incoming waves of commuters heading to work swept him up, and he got pushed into the subway, instead.

And after the crowd had left, only Han Su-Yeong and her dazed expression remained on the empty subway platform.

“……What the hell? Why the hell am I standing here??"

Han Su-Yeong tilted her head, before scratching her hair hard while wondering out loud, "Did my sleepwalking flare up again??"

She confirmed the time with her smartphone and exploded in irritation. "Son of a…

And I haven't even finished writing today's chapter, too!"

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[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has plagiarised your lost memories!]

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Tsu-chuchuchuchu……

"Han Su-Yeong?"

Tsu-chuchu……

"Han Su-Yeong!!"

She heard someone call out to her among all the terrible ringing in her ears.

"Han Su-Yeong!"

And right next instance, a powerful impact landing on the back of her head helped her to regain her wits. The pain emanating from the back of the head was hellish. She already knew which fool would hit her so mercilessly like this.

"Jung-Hyeok-ssi!! What are you doing, hitting her so hard like that?! You could've killed her right as she's waking up!"

Han Su-Yeong slowly raised her head and discovered Yi Seol-Hwa supporting her, as well as Yu Jung-Hyeok and his massive scowl. Also, the other members of , too. Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Shin Yu-Seung, Yi Ji-Hye…

Companions, currently covered in dust from head to toe.

Han Su-Yeong intently stared at them as if to study each and every one present.

Eventually, her gaze shifted over to Yu Jung-Hyeok. "…… I think I now know how you felt back when you finally recalled the 0th turn."

"What rubbish are you talking about now?"

“……I remember."

Han Su-Yeong looked around here and there as if it still didn't feel real to her yet. Then, she slowly looked behind her. That's where the field covered in dense fog created out of letters could be seen. That was the gateway they passed through just now, and also, the hurdle where she nearly died, as well.

Yi Ji-Hye checking out Han Su-Yeong's complexion asked. "Eonni, are you really alright? You were mumbling some incoherent stuff about going somewhere to sign a contract for a novel and stuff……"

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has stopped its storytelling.]

Han Su-Yeong looked down at her own trembling hands.

Why did these memories return to her only now?

…No, hold on – were they even real, to begin with?

「Once upon a time, she wrote a certain story with these very hands.」

Faint memories that were still overflowing with vividness.

Han Su-Yeong organised her thoughts in a sequential manner – why she was here, what had happened so far, and what she needed to say now.

"I'm…… the 'Ways of Survival's'……"

Han Su-Yeong barely managed to breathe in a couple of times, and just as she was about to open her mouth again, Yu Jung-Hyeok abruptly cut her off. "Stop wasting time with unnecessary remarks, and let's head out."

She raised her head after hearing those words.

[Main Scenario has been updated!]

['Final Scenario' will now commence.]

Even as she stared at the scenario messages unfolding before her very eyes, everything still didn't feel real to her. But, she knew why those messages were floating around in her vision, though.

「The companions had broken past the 99 scenarios once more.」

"……Why are you acting so dazed like this?"

This was the tragedy that she set in motion. And the very people who faced this tragedy head-on were extending their hands towards her.

"Let's go, Su-Yeong-ssi."

Yu Sang-Ah lightly tapped Han Su-Yeong's back and took the lead.

The backs of her companions walking ahead of her were murky, cloudy.

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This was impossible. This was not something you could pull off because of your desire to save someone else.

Even then, they still did it.

In the far-off distance, the wall of letters covering up the end of the world could be seen.

The 'Final Wall'.

The companions exchanged knowing glances and began pulling out their weapons one by one – and simultaneously, the roars of the Constellations came from afar.

Yu Jung-Hyeok watching this scene unfold also unsheathed his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]. "That fool is beyond that wall."

The Dokkaebis from the Bureau were blocking their path, and the

Dokkaebi King's figure could be seen guarding the Final Wall itself. Han Su-Yeong slowly sucked in her breaths and got up from her spot.

It truly had been a lengthy story. And finally, its ending was right before her eyes.

「They have finally reached the conclusion she had written.」

Fin.

I remembered the first time I read that novel.

A really stuffy, boring hospital's ward. A single PC located in its lobby.

When I stood in line to have a go at it, a gentleman wearing a fedora stepped aside for me. The computer screen at the time was showing the webnovel platform that enjoyed visiting.

I dazedly stared at the screen before inputting the keywords. I might have inserted three or so words, but couldn't quite remember what I typed back then. However, I still remembered what I was thinking of back then. The mechanical pencil leads strewn about on the classroom

floor, the indigo-hued skies extending far beyond outside the windows.

What I could tell for sure was that my hands, used to open the classroom window, had typed something and that lead me to discover that novel.

「Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World」

Through that story, I survived.

「He was definitely not at fault for this story being born」

I felt sick inside. I couldn't fight against the dizziness and collapsed on the floor. The texts before my eyes were blurry and hard to see.

「Han Su-Yeong was tls123.」

While panting heavily, I lay unmoving on the floor for a long time. Only the same exact question continued to swirl around in my head – the question of "But, why?"

「Why, for someone like me?」

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I remained collapsed for a while. I thought I cried, too. However, no matter how I thrashed and screamed and sobbed, the already-written sentences couldn't be changed. Han Su-Yeong had to spend 13 years of life just for me, and helped me live by crafting sentences literally carved out of her. And then, she was extinguished.

「Kim Dok Ja」

[The 4th Wall] was calling out to me. I quietly listened to the next words.

「Y o u sho uld r e a d」

I gingerly stood back up. My reflection on the windows was a complete mess. It'd be hard to call my body an adult's anymore. My height had decreased a lot, and my face had gotten younger, too. The coat I wore no longer fit me. I stared at that face for a long time, before taking the coat off for good.

“……How many years has it been?"

「Ear th's ti me h a s no mea ning he re」

I understood what that meant.

This subway was the location where the 'Most Ancient Dream' had his dreams. So, the time of other world-lines couldn't measure the 'time' flowing within this train.

In all honesty, I had completely lost all sense of time after entering this train, anyway.

"Even then, there should still be this thing called perceived time, right?"

「Ar ound 21763 y e a r s」

"It's not as long as I thought. I'm still way younger than the 'Secretive Plotter', right?"

「St ill a li ttle r un t」

I heard [The 4th Wall] cackle away. If it wasn't for this guy's presence here, I'd have gone insane a long time ago.

Along with the 'Pah-sususu' noise, the tip of my pinky decreased a little.

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Since when did this start from, I wondered. I didn't do anything, yet my body continued to grow smaller. Well, if I were to be more

specific, it wasn't really 'I didn't do anything', though.

“……Will I keep getting smaller?" I stared at the crumbs of Fables drifting away outside the windows and asked. "Where are those Fables going off to, anyway?"

「To uni ver se's sub con scious ness」

"And where is that?"

「In a wor ld-li ne y o u ar en't con sci ous of」

The role of the 'Most Ancient Dream' was to imagine all of the world-lines. Even if I wasn't conscious of it, my subconsciousness was still continuously watching the world-lines.

「Tho se Fables wi ll be reb orn as ano ther Kim Dok Ja」

"As another Kim Dok-Ja?"

「Me ta phor ica lly spea king its li ke th at」

I thought I could understand what [The 4th Wall] was saying.

Fables were streaming beyond the galaxies to head towards another world-line.

Those Fables were, in essence, 'me'.

Just like the 49% version of me living along with my companions somewhere in the 1864th regression turn, my fragments could very well be reborn as 'Kim Dok-Ja' in a world-line somewhere out there.

"If it's only that little, I think it'll be a bit of a push to call that guy 'Kim Dok-Ja'. I mean, he won't be the same as me with such a small fragment."

「Y o u mi ght be ri ght」

An existence that might have a different name and face to me. Even then, that existence would come to life and start imagining the universe. He'd be moved after reading the

story, and then, stare at the world-line.

And just like that, he'd maintain this universe.

“……I see."

Somehow, I thought I could understand the principle of this universe just a little.

I pressed my crumbling fingers against the window. When I did, the rate of crumbling began accelerating.

「If y o u do th at」

"This is my way of atoning for this story."

Not just from my fingers, but the Fables began scattering away little by little from the shoulders as well as my legs, too.

The scattered Fables would fly around in the universe and become sentences that go on to support this universe from somewhere.

「To say that, though you have grown up while reading this story, there's no need for you to become it.」

That's what the author of the 'Ways of Survival', Han Su-Yeong said.

I had clearly heard her. Even then, I couldn't heed her words.

How could I make any other choice when looking at such a story?

When I closed my eyes, the overview of the entire universe would get drawn inside my head.

Han Su-Yeong wrote the story.

Yu Jung-Hyeok lived that story.

And, I read that very story.

And that's how this world barely managed to reach its completion.

「"Dok-Ja-ssi."」

Because this tragedy existed, I got to meet certain people.

Someone was able to get saved, too.

「Kim Dok-Ja stared into the universe with no visible end.」

And now, I knew what my future was like. Every time I read something, I'd crumble away. My crumbling Fables would scatter to countless world-lines out there and become the 'gaze' that maintained this universe.

I would lose all of my memories, and lose everything that I hold dear. And in the end, only the desire to see the 'next story' would remain in me.

But, without that desire, this universe couldn't continue.

This universe could only continue telling its story as long as someone was looking at it.

Being stuck and unmoving in this universe meant death.

Tsu-chuchuchu……

The countless 'me' divided into particles continued to spread out to the numerous world-lines out there. The rate of the Fable's scattering continued to hasten.

"If I forget about everything… I won't feel this pain anymore, right?"

「Y o u wo nt re mem ber any th ing af ter all」

To someone who even lost the traces of his loss, no such thing as 'loss' existed.

While picking up the smartphone rolling around on the floor, I spoke

up. "…… Will I have enough time to read it one more time, I wonder?"

I opened the file for the 'Ways of Survival', and scrolled up past the [Author's words]

that I had to read with great difficulty.

「Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.」

I started reading this novel from the very beginning.

I read Yu Jung-Hyeok's 3rd turn. Some stories, I already knew. While some others felt brand new to me.

The so-called final revised version was exactly the same as the original that I remembered.

'Kim Dok-Ja' didn't exist in it.

Pah-susususu……

Just as my Fable scattered away, the sentences from the 'Ways of Survival' filled me up inside. When I got tired, I closed my eyes for a little bit and rested, and after resting, I continued reading the novel.

Fifth turn, sixth…… 64th…… 129th……

672nd.

914th.

1642nd……

The page continued to scroll down, and I was overjoyed or saddened several times.

Not being able to comment did bum me out. I wanted to let Han Su-

Yeong know of my emotions one more time. To tell her that I could only come this far because of the story you gave me, that I loved your story more than anyone in this world.

And so, I read. I read, and then, read some more.

How long did I read this very story?

Tsu-chuchuchu……

「… 」

By the time I reached the epilogue, my vision suddenly grew fuzzy.

I even wondered if I became blind after reading a novel for far too long.

[A new update has been completed.]

But then, my vision was slowly restored. What I saw weren't proper sentences, however. Sentences and paragraphs had become individual fragments.

Words that were no longer in the form of a completed novel. Even then, I could still read them somehow.

「A world had been destroyed, and a brand new one was being born.」

My heart was beating loudly.

A story I was intimately familiar with was there.

「I was the sole reader who knew the conclusion of this world.」

Within this story, I existed. And…

「"I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok."」

「"Ah, it seems that I haven't introduced myself yet. My name is Han Su-Yeong. I'm the assistant to Cha Sang-Gyeong-nim in the group.」

And, they were there, too.

「"What if the 'scenarios' didn't start, what would've happened to us?"」

「"Dok-Ja-ssi, your sponsor isn't something like the 'One-eyed Fortuneteller', right?"」

「"Dok-Ja-ssi, have you thrown a hand grenade before?"」

「"Ahjussi, do you have any particular food you like?"」

We broke past the scenarios, together.

「Hyung, are you maybe a god?」

「"Load the cannons."」

「"Everyone, fight to your hearts' content. I won't let anyone die."」

「"You stinking bastards!! Again, you didn't even come to fetch me……!!"」

「"The one I like isn't you, but the 'Demon King of Salvation'…… 」

「[Ba-aht!]」

And, I lived my life together with them.

「"The next scenario is……"」

We experienced trials, and had to face off against life-threatening situations many times.

We met Constellations.

We broke past seemingly-impossible scenarios several times.

And eventually, reached the end of the hellish scenarios.

「[Your ■■ is 'Eternity'.]」

The companions returned to their everyday lives.

「Some people were rebuilding the destroyed PC Bangs. They were putting up the torn posters of the computer games once more. In the world where the apocalypse had been overcome, people would search for other forms of entertainment once more.

Yu Jung-Hyeok observed this spectacle, and quietly clenched his right hand that hadn't held a mouse in a long, long while.」

「Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong were enrolled into a temporary school. Not an elementary, not a secondary, nor was it a high school – no, it was as the word implied, a 'temporary' school. Shin Yu-Seung was surprised to learn that such a place could exist in this world.」

「Yi Ji-Hye stared at the sight of the destroyed 'Taepung Girls' High' for a long time,

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then started walking on the school's athletics field. She used to run on this very field with her friends once upon a time. She quietly stared at the worn-out track lines, before cautiously assuming the starting posture.」

While reading the continuing stories of my companions, I wiped my eyes several times.

This was the ending to this story.

The companions were definitely living their lives in that place. They ate, they slept, they met with each other and talked. And 'I' was there, too.

The 49% version of me. Kim Dok-Ja that had the memories of the companions, but didn't know anything about the 'Ways of Survival'…

「And Kim Dok-Ja read those sentences.」

But then…

「"You, just who the hell are you?"」

What was going on here?

「"Speak. Who the hell are you?"」

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

「"I'm sure of it. Kim Dok-Ja is still in that place."」

But, how……

「"If you get a chance to run again, do you believe you can see it better the next time?"」

……Why?

Tsu-chuchuchuchu……

The story was continuing on. The story that should've ended didn't end.

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More correctly, they chose to 'not end it'.

「[Stigma, 'Group Regression Lv.1' is activating!]」

I read that sentence half in despair.

This shouldn't have happened. This sentence, it should never have been written.

But the sentence uncaringly led to the next one.

「"Remember this. We have only one opportunity."」

The companions, they were fighting again.

The hellish scenarios were a place they shouldn't have gone back to, no matter what their reasons were. Even then, my companions returned to that place.

「"Hey, shorty. You aren't going to flip a coin this time?"

"It'll be the same whether I do or not, you know."

"What do you mean?"

"Even if I flip it a hundred times and it comes out only once, even if only one percent of hyung remains in that place, I'll still go there to rescue him. Because, that one percent is still hyung."」

Then, the scenario commenced. And in the midst of the banquet of Coins exploding in the air, Dokkaebis of were clearly freaking out.

Within the explosive level of interest shown by the Constellations, the companions were shouting out loudly.

「"Hey, Abaddon! Choose me! I'm gonna absolutely become hundreds of times stronger than that sooty bastard in the future!"」

「"General-nim! Are you there? I know you're looking at me right now!"」

「"I don't need any sponsors, so please just give me Coins, instead."」

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「"…… Black Flame Dragon, stop pestering me with messages while I'm still being civil, okay? I told you I won't choose you this time around."」

They had to be insane.

「"Fufufu, you sure took your sweet time getting to Chungmuro. You think you can rescue that 'Bi-sil-ee' like this? As an aside, this whole area is now this great one's territo……" [1]

"Will you just shut up and hand over the flag, Gong Pil-Du?"」

These people who lost their minds were clearing the scenario with insane methods.

Dangerous moments came in their direction many times, but the companions never yielded once.

「[Incarnation, 'Yi Ji-Hye', is activating Stigma, 'Transmission Lv.1'!]」

「"You stinking sooty bastard! This is why only you got stronger, by using crap like this!"」

The [Transmission]. The regressor-specific skill that allowed one to strongly 'ruminate'

over the memories from the previous life and let one regain their past skills.

「"Uriel! Great Sage! Abyssal Black Flame Dragon!"」

And with the aid from the Constellations added in, the companions got to clear the scenario at a considerable pace. It truly was an amazing marching speed.

「"We can clear this with Avatars. No one has to die."」

However, it wasn't as if they emerged as unopposed victors every single time.

「"Conquering King. My apologies, but you need to die here."」

Some of the people they regressed with turned out to be traitors.

「"Had you regained your original strength, all three of us combined wouldn't even be a match to you, but……"

"But, as it is now? It's a different story."」

I bit down on my lip.

These people joined the regression journey while harbouring impure motivation from the very beginning.

And to make matters worse, they aimed for the early part of the scenarios, when Yu Jung-Hyeok was with Yu Mi-Ah. They probably thought that he'd be at his weakest around this point in time.

「However, that was a miscalculation.」

…Wha?

「"Mi-Ah-yah."」

Almost at the same time Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke up, a lengthy sword emerged from Yu Mi-Ah's mouth.

「The Dark Heavenly Demon Sword.」

The highest-grade item that could only be acquired around the middle stages of the scenarios, was now firmly gripped in Yu Jung-Hyeok's hand. Chills ran down my skin.

I had no idea that Yu Mi-Ah's 'Inventory' could be used in that fashion…

While emitting truly incredible killing intent, Yu Jung-Hyeok coldly declared.

「"Die."」

Sentences continued on sporadically after that.

「"The 'Demon King of Salvation' during this turn is me!"

"What the hell, we agreed that I'll be the one! That Modifier is mine, noona!"」

The companions didn't concede an inch to anyone, and…

「Majority of the Constellations are baring their animosity towards 'Kim Dok-Ja

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Company's' Incarnations!」

And, they didn't compromise once with anyone, either.

The Kim Dok-Ja-less 'Kim Dok-Ja Company' continued to clear the scenarios in a pace not too slow, but not too fast, either

Certain scenes were dealt with using simple descriptions, while some others were completely omitted. The later they got in the scenarios, the worse the segmentation of each scenes became. It was as if the rough sketches of ideas had been left behind there, instead.

Companions who were at the 20th scenario were suddenly in the 15th, then they could be found in the 35th next. However, there was no doubt that the companions were there. And I could imagine them.

「They ran on the blank margins.」

They were running on the scenario's field of snow. And they were advancing forward one sentence at a time. They were gradually getting closer to me.

While looking at them, I repeated the cycle of crying and sleeping. The fuzzier my consciousness became, the stronger my desire grew. Even though I knew that I shouldn't think this way, I couldn't stop myself.

「I want to read this story for a little bit longer.」

Just like that, I read the disconnected sentences, and then, read the one after that. And I imagined what might be between those sentences, as if I was groping around in the dark.

The viewpoint that the author couldn't control, and one that no reader could predict.

And within this space between the lines not addressed by any sentences, the companions continued to complete the scenarios little by little.

「Inside this space between the lines where no one could intrude upon their lives, they remained as gods of this story.」

While reading their story, I blacked out several times. My reading speed got worse and worse, and my Fable was disappearing bit by bit, as well. Meanwhile, the sentences of my companions continued to diligently pile up. To the 98th scenario, and then, to the 99th once more. Sentences written by their own lives were accurately being compiled one by one. And eventually……

「They have finally reached the conclusion she had written.」

The very last sentence arrived at my doorstep. That was the end of the 'Ways of Survival', a story seemingly abandoned in the middle of being written. A story that didn't get completed because of that reason.

From beyond the very last sentence of the story, a certain noise came to me. A noise that sounded like someone calling out to someone else. Or perhaps, the noise of someone knocking on the door.

The smartphone went off with a 'tab!' noise, and its pitch-black screen reflected my face, now that of a child. I was crying.

「Kim Dok-Ja slowly raised his head.」

I felt the faint vibration of the subway. Since when did it start?

Thud-!

Someone was pounding on the rear door of the train's cabin.

Fin.

"Run! We only have to go a little bit further!"

Han Su-Yeong, along with her companions, broke through the waves of the Constellations. The Ark scattered debris as it was destroyed, and revealed the [Final Wall] in its full glory in the distance.

The grace of a Great Fable was enveloping the companions as if to protect them.

[Great Fable, 'One Who Rebels Against Fate', has begun its storytelling.]

It was a new Great Fable they got to earn during this regression turn. Without it, they would've died many times over.

They could see the figures of Constellations marching towards them from the distance.

Like enraged wild beasts, Myth-grade Constellations from and

were rushing in their direction.

「Unlike their previous regression turn, they didn't have 'Outer Gods' supporting them this time.」

Their combat force was in an overwhelmingly disadvantageous situation. The only reason why they weren't pushed back even then, was because the strongest ever group in existence made out of regressors was lending them support.

The ones taking on the frontlines were the Chinese and Indian Incarnations.

When China's Fei Hu gave his signal, Incarnations from his own force, [Ah Q] yanked out their weapons simultaneously. As if he couldn't possibly lose here, India's Ranvir Khan also joined the fray. The Incarnations from [Trimurti] following after him pulled out their own spears too, and caused the sand storm to violently rage on.

Then, [Justice] led by Selena Kim and [Solzhenitsyn] led by Iris who tagged along with her took on both sides of the flanks.

Even then, their battle situation remained disadvantageous.

[Go on ahead, I shall take care of this place.]

[If you fail to rescue my disciple, then consider your lives forfeit.]

Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Saint, they too were part of the 100-strong regressors. Weapons of these two swept across the battlefield, and the Transcenders from Murim supported their rear and followed after the duo.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

Both Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Saint had grown even stronger than before through the regression; as if they were in competition against each other, their sword strikes raucously shook the entire battlefield. The screams of the Constellations being torn apart by the silver-hued storm reverberated throughout the land.

The [Wall] needed to be opened while they were buying a little bit of time.

「This wall had been opened once before.」

Han Su-Yeong looked up at the massive wall they had finally succeeded in reaching and spoke up. "Jang Ha-Yeong."

"Yes, ma'am."

As if she was waiting for it, Jang Ha-Yeong extended her hand.

She was now the full-fledged 'King of Transcenders' after going through the scenarios one more time.

[The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' has discovered its intended position.]

The [Final Wall] began vibrating as if it was reacting to their Great Fable.

"Yu Sang-Ah."

Yu Sang-Ah nodded her head and stepped forward.

[The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' has discovered its intended position.]

.

.

.

.

「[You are… I see… You have journeyed this lengthy cycle of time and eventually made your way back here, my arhat.]」

The Fable of Sakyamuni quietly entered their ears. Sakyamuni of this

world-line easily accepted Yu Sang-Ah's existence. He had already repeated many, many cycles of samsara, allowing him to gain an understanding of this universe's rules.

"Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Gil-Yeong."

The [Wall That Divides the Good and Evil] they received from 'Metatron' and 'Agares'.

Jeong Hui-Won reached out first and placed her hand on the [Final Wall].

「[…… Have you really come here, after witnessing what's beyond that wall?]」

Metatron of this world-line was deeply astonished by the companions' existence. He accepted the eventual destruction of , and admitted that that result couldn't be changed. However, he made a slightly different decision during this regression turn.

The proof of that was the 's Archangels currently aiding the Incarnations.

However, it wasn't only him who made a bizarre choice.

「[How amusing. You dare to ask me, a Demon King, to hand over the [Wall] to you.]」

The Demon Kings and the angels who fought against each other with murderous intensity back in the Great War of Saints and Demons stood as their allies this time. It was a choice based on their desire to survive, but nevertheless, it proved to be a great help to .

[The 'Wall That Divides the Good and Evil' has discovered its intended position.]

[A great number of Constellations are unleashing their Status towards !]

Of course, it wasn't as if every Constellation out there became their allies. The absolute majority of still remained as their enemies, and those Constellations who chose to help were minuscule in number.

Even then, the Companions got this far safely. Although deep scars remained in various parts of their bodies, not a single one was lost along the way.

This was only because no one got greedy and the end goal was the same for everyone.

Han Su-Yeong looked at Yi Hyeon-Seong the last.

The burly man's back was carrying the pale-faced Kim Dok-Ja. More specifically, not Kim Dok-Ja but an Avatar he left behind.

She looked at him and spoke. "Help us, Kim Dok-Ja."

However, this man was also definitely Kim Dok-Ja. Just like how the 1863rd turn's Han Su-Yeong was definitely 'Han Su-Yeong'.

"The other me might not want this to happen. This story… it has ended back then……"

Kim Dok-Ja stammered. He had come to accept that he was Kim Dok-Ja's Avatar by now. Han Su-Yeong quietly stared at him, before saying this.

"Why don't we ask that after meeting the other you?"

That brought a sad little smile on Kim Dok-Ja's lips. He looked at Han Su-Yeong, then looked at the faces of the companions one by one.

"If this is… the story you wanted……"

His pale hand then touched the [Final Wall].

The last fragment of the Final Wall was [The 4th Wall]. And as he was Kim Dok-Ja's Avatar, he too held a part of that key.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu……!

As if this world wasn't acknowledging his existence, Kim Dok-Ja's body began shaking unsteadily.

And soon after that, a portion of the wall opened up along with loud

splitting noises.

Kim Dok-Ja shaking around as if he was getting electrocuted blacked out instantly. Yi Hyeon-Seong continued to carry him on the back.

Yu Jung-Hyeok dusting the blade of his Dark Heavenly Demon Sword spoke up.

"Forward, at top speed."

Along with his signal, the companions began running forward.

"Everyone, stay strong! Only a little bit more to go!"

"We still have enough Life and Death Pills left, so even if you're only slightly injured, please tell me right away!"

The voices of the companions were encouraging each other. Han Su-Yeong ran while listening to them. A bright-white field of snow stretched before her eyes. Letters piling up like snow could be seen here and there on this field. She stepped on those letters and leapt up.

Did the 1863rd turn's her write this story in the revised version?

Did she think about Kim Dok-Ja's story, and the epilogue to come after?

…She couldn't tell.

No matter what she tried, she simply couldn't remember that portion.

It was then, something fell and settled on her eyelashes. She reflexively wiped it away, only for snowflake-like things to stain her hand.

「… This girl, you told me that you were a penniless book lover, didn't you?」

The white snowflakes of letters were scattering in the air. Sentences that definitely existed there, but couldn't be seen because how pure-white their colour was.

「Han Su-Yeong.」

Han Su-Yeong dazedly stared at that 'sentence' falling into her hand.

「Your story, it…… 」

This was Kim Dok-Ja's sentence. Not just anyone, but Kim Dok-Ja himself had written this earnest impression. She gripped the sentence tightly. Just like the starlight being pushed away by the breaking of dawn, the sentences crumbled away within her hand.

「Don't worry. I will read it. Even if it's over 3000 chapters.」

These sentences, they were something she so desperately wanted to have. Unfortunately, they weren't hers.

Memories were rushing in. Emotions that her other self had experienced.

Han Su-Yeong could vividly feel them even now. The resentment that didn't know which way to go was spreading within her mind.

「Beyond this field of snow was where Kim Dok-Ja could be found.」

Kim Dok-Ja, who made Kim Dok-Ja who he was. Kim Dok-Ja, who remembered the

'Ways of Survival'. Kim Dok-Ja, who chose the memories of the book he had written over the memories of happier days…

"Goddammit…… goddammit!!"

The novel that was written by her, who was also not her. That very

novel saved Kim Dok-Ja, and also at the same time, it doomed him. And she now needed to take responsibility for the conclusion to the tragedy her other self had created.

It was around then that a faint flicker of light revealed itself from afar.

Ku-gugugugu……

She saw something busy rushing forward beyond this vast field of snow. The companions looked at each other all at once. Not a single person here didn't know what that thing was.

「It was the subway.」

"Chimera Dragon!"

The Chimera Dragon loudly howled out as it got summoned, and took flight after the companions got on its back. The creature scythed through the air and reached the rear of the subway in an instant. Only a little bit remained now. As long as they could bridge this gap, they……!

[Gyahhhhhhh!]

Suddenly, the Chimera Dragon screamed and lost its balance. The stunned Shin Yu-

Seung quickly took a look behind only to discover some 'things' were biting onto the Dragon's tail.

[[Grrrrrr……!]]

Large wild dogs resembling pitch-black shadows began biting into the Dragon's tail and its wings. These creatures were appearing from a portal opening up in the air. The Chimera Dragon's torn-off flesh got scattered away within the white snowfield.

"Hounds Chasing After the Abyss??"

They had seen these creatures before. These hounds from another dimension attacked the 'Secretive Plotter' and the characters from the 999th turn. They were terrifying monsters that supposedly hunted down the wanderers of the world-lines that violated the Probability.

But, why were these hounds attacking them now?

Yu Jung-Hyeok gasped and spoke. "…… It seems that they judged the 'Group Regression'

to be a danger to the world-line."

"Goddammit……"

The number of the hounds rushing outside the portal increased exponentially.

They even saw hounds with massive physiques, too. This level of attacking force was truly unprecedented. And accompanied by the loud howl that reverberated throughout the snowfield, the hounds kicked the air and pounced on them simultaneously.

The moment the black clouds of hounds landed on the companions……

The heavens seemed to shatter along with the loud "RUMBLE!!"

The golden-coloured lightning crashed down and hounds were viciously cast away. Yu Sang-Ah was the first to figure out who was behind the attack.

"Great Sage!"

The golden rims were glowing gloriously. The master of the Ruyi Jingu Bang was grinning confidently. [Leave this to me.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is unleashing his Status!]

It wasn't just the Great Sage alone.

Some had followed the companions into the passageway of the [Final Wall] left wide open.

[This is my opportunity to show everyone what will happen if this great one uses both of his hands!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', has removed all the seals on himself!]

The noble flames of an Archangel were added to the mix and burned away at the hounds. [I may not be as strong as the 999th turn's me, but… there's no problem buying you more time.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is rousing up the flames of hell!]

The flames of [Hellfire] brilliantly danced upwards as pure-white wings spread out.

With a faint smile, Uriel spoke. [I'll leave Kim Dok-Ja in your hands, Hui-Won-ah.]

Using that fleeting opening the Constellations had created, the Chimera Dragon finally managed to bite onto the rear of the subway. However, the vehicle's hardy exterior didn't break even when the Dragon's fangs clamped down on it.

"Master! With me!"

Yi Ji-Hye holding swords in both of her hands kicked off the Dragon's back and leapt up.

Two swords were held in her grip – the [Twin Dragon Sword] of the Maritime War God, and the [Invincible Warrior's Sword] from the Goryeo's number one swordsman.

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Swordsman', is bestowing his blessing!]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is cheering on his Incarnation!]

The Fourth Law.

Fourth Sword that Beheads the Emptiness.

It was the skill Cheok Jun-Gyeong used while fighting against the 'Indescribable Distance'. Although still incomplete, Yi Ji-Hye could use this sword strike to some degree now. This miracle only came about due to the hellish training she went through in the 'Isle of Reincarnators' as well as her stunning innate talent.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

The subway's exterior that withstood a Dragon's fangs began to bend bit by bit from her continuous sword strikes. Not missing that opening, Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] also made a move.

The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Secret Technique: Inner Mystery Transmission.

Shooting Star Slash.

The trajectory of destruction the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] drew slammed into the rear of the subway.

Once the choking dust cleared out of their view, a small hole had appeared on the train's rear.

"It's done! Everyone, get in!"

The companions rapidly infiltrated the subway's interior. More correctly, with the exception of two people.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok! Behind you!!"

[[Grrrrrr!!]]

The hounds that the Constellations failed to block were flooding in

from behind them.

Yu Jung-Hyeok unleashed all of his strength as a Transcender to face them head-on.

He shouted out while smacking the hounds away with the storm-like barrage of sword strikes.

"Go on ahead! I shall catch up to you soon!"

Han Su-Yeong bit her lip.

It wasn't just anyone but Yu Jung-Hyeok, the strongest among their group. As he was a man who could fight evenly against a Myth-grade Constellation, he wouldn't get done in by the hounds of the abyss that easily.

“……Don't get killed, okay?"

Han Su-Yeong left those words behind and hurriedly entered the subway's interior. It was as exactly the same as the interior of the third line train they all remembered.

「It was none other than that very same train, where they left Kim Dok-Ja behind.」

Han Su-Yeong quickly checked for the train cabin's information. Along with the 'Tsu-chuchut' noise, the cabin's number floated up.

She reflexively shouted out. "Kim Dok-Ja is in the cabin number 3807! Everyone, get to the front!"

This was a similar situation to back when they earned the Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring'. It seemed that the rest of the companions also realised this.

"This does resemble that time when we fought against Surya. I shall

pry open the door in front of us!" Yi Hyeon-Seong quickly rushed forward, and while expanding every muscle on his body, he let out a mighty shout. "Haaaaaaahp!"

The [Great Mountain Push] that had exceeded the skill proficiency was activated, and the thick subway's door creaked loudly while being pushed open.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

['Stage Transformation' has been triggered!]

This Great Fable could only be completed because everyone worked together. And the blessing of this Fable was now aiding them.

When Yi Hyeon-Seong couldn't open a door, Yu Sang-Ah found the button to operate it, and when a door even she couldn't do anything about appeared, Yi Gil-Yeong summoned his insects and wore out the internal parts to make way.

And so, they continued to open one, open two, and then, opened yet another door. As the number of doors they managed to open grew higher, the expressions of the

companions were gradually getting heated up, too.

「Kim Dok-Ja was definitely beyond there.」

Everyone in the group could feel it. The pitch-black door before them, it had to be the

[Final Door].

"……Urgh. It's impossible with my Stigma."

Unfortunately, this door didn't want to open unlike before.

"I can't find the button, either."

"Even the bugs say they can't figure out its structure."

"Should I use my skill to break it?"

They resorted to Yi Ji-Hye's sword strikes as well as Yi Hyeon-Seong's [Great Mountain Destruction], but the door didn't budge an inch. The companions could only look at each other. How come only this door refused to open up?

It was then that Yu Sang-Ah opened her mouth. "Everyone, wait. I think this door is the same as the one Yu Jung-Hyeok-ssi broke back in the past."

"Yu Jung-Hyeok did that?"

"Yes. Back in the third regression turn, Jung-Hyeok-ssi broke this door and entered…"

Han Su-Yeong reflexively looked behind her. But Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't come with them.

He was probably still fighting against the 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' even now at the rear of the train.

It was right then that Shin Yu-Seung cried out. "Hounds are here!"

Even before they had realised it, the hounds were already trying to sneak in through the gaps they had destroyed.

Han Su-Yeong's mind began racing. What happened to Yu Jung-Hyeok? Could it be that he got……?

"Block the rear!"

"Eonni! Hurry up!"

There was no more time to think. Yi Hyeon-Seong ran forward like a true tanker, and started enduring against the hounds' fangs by entering [Steel Transformation], while Yi Ji-Hye and Jeong Hui-Won unsheathed their swords to smack away the creatures.

Jang Ha-Yeong shouted out. "Han Su-Yeong! Do something!"

Han Su-Yeong approached the black door. When she placed her hand on it, faint sparks began exploding. She slowly closed her eyes.

All of the sentences were, in actual reality, written by her hands. Even if that was the

'other Han Su-Yeong', that version was still undoubtedly Han Su-Yeong. So, this hand should be able to open this door, too.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchu-!

As if she was now re-writing the sentences, Han Su-Yeong started messing with the wall's Fable.

「"I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok."」

The regressor Yu Jung-Hyeok was her creation. That was why she should be able to open this door, as well.

「Unfortunately, Han Su-Yeong didn't know.」

Tsu-chuchuchut!

「A story that had already left the author's hands was no longer under its creator's control.」

The universe of the 'Ways of Survival' flooded into Han Su-Yeong's head. The things she did write, and those she didn't. Stories that she imagined and those she couldn't even have, crashed and churned in opposite directions inside her mind all at the same time.

"Keuk……!"

Blood trickled out from her eyes and mouth. The blood flow reversed, causing her blood to pour out onto the subway's floor.

As her vision was dyed in crimson, Han Su-Yeong turned to look back at her companions. They were gradually spreading apart while fighting. And their running footsteps imprinted on the subway's corridor remained there like Fables.

[You don't have the 'Overwrite' authority!]

「An already-completed world was right before her eyes.」

The voices of her companions calling out to her seemed so distant.

「The world where the result devours the cause, and the cause devours the result. The world where all possibilities exist, and the individual possibility supports and maintains each other. A perfect, immortal epic where a story manufactures a story all on its own.」

She looked back, and the space before her began distorting along with a shower of sparks. The subway's four-sided door slowly started spinning and drew a circle. The door, now spinning viciously, became a pitch-black circle.

A perfect, complete circle that didn't permit any and all types of external intrusions.

She tottered and reached out to this circle, but Han Su-Yeong couldn't even touch it.

This circle now resembled a single full stop. A full stop announcing that the story was truly complete, just like this.

「t l s 1 2 3」

And this full stop was now addressing her.

「Y o u ca nn ot cha nge th is sto ry」

Fin.

The sentence floated up to the air. When she heard the voice that utterly ignored spelling rules or word spacing, Han Su-Yeong grew deeply flustered.

"Y-you are……?"

She did hear some things about this voice from Kim Dok-Ja in the past.

- Right, that guy can also speak.

-… A skill can talk??

- Well, I admit it kinda talks in a funny way, but you can still more or less understand it.

She had no idea that one day she'd get to hear that voice herself.

"The 4th Wall??"

When called out, the spinning circle began to cackle.

「Y o u lot ca nn ot pa ss he re the great one do es n't wa nt it」

…'The great one'?

She had heard of that title somewhere before.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchut!

The Probability's sparks wildly exploded and the companions all screamed out. The vicious storm of aftermath even managed to blow away the 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' outside the subway.

['The Final Wall' is not permitting your group's entry.]

[Your group does not have the qualifications to meet the 'Most Ancient Dream'.]

The pain akin to their bodies being shredded apart into tiny bits slammed into them.

This was no doubt a ploy to push the companions outside the subway.

「T his is t h e fi nal stop」

One of Han Su-Yeong's knees was bent in an abnormal direction. However, she didn't even scream once and simply glared at the pitch-black circle right before her eyes.

"I'll decide when and where I get off."

「The 1865th turn's Han Su-Yeong didn't select the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.」

An unbelievable level of forceful aura flooded out from her entire figure.

「Han Su-Yeong became a Constellation on her own.」

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', is revealing her Status!]

It was the same Modifier that the 1863rd turn's Han Su-Yeong had

acquired.

She unleashed every bit of Fable she had been saving up until now. Brilliantly-pure blue rays of light swirled violently from one of her irises.

[Exclusive skill, 'Eye of Truth', has been activated!]

Back during the 1863rd turn, this skill failed to penetrate past that wall. However, Han Su-Yeong of this regression turn was a different being altogether.

[Fable, 'Revision Specialist', has begun its storytelling!]

In this turn, she had been diligently acquiring a lot more Fables related to 'writing'

than before.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu……!

Just like how the foundations of other characters were a collection of sentences, it should be the same story for [The 4th Wall], as well. As long as this world was a novel, this wall must've been made up of words and sentences.

.

.

.

.

Even if she failed to decipher its foundation, there should still be sentences left behind somewhere that helped her make a guess.

[The 4th Wall] cottoned on to what Han Su-Yeong was planning to do and ballooned up its overall thickness.

「U s e le ss」

['The 4th Wall' is increasing its thickness even more!]

The spinning black circle grew even more robust.

The 4th Wall. The mind defence skill that couldn't be penetrated by the existences found within the 'Ways of Survival'.

Han Su-Yeong didn't try to forcibly penetrate the wall. Instead, she quietly stared at it.

[Fable, 'Guide of the Line Spacing', has begun its storytelling!]

「Some things would grow even more obvious the more you try to hide them.」

Han Su-Yeong scanned the outer appearance of the wall. There were plenty of scratches and cracks visible on it. Its past history of not sparing itself when trying to protect Kim Dok-Ja was left behind as fully-visible traces all over the wall.

「That great one must be protected.」

Why did this wall hide that sentence in the most secretive place of all?

「That is the last favour the god asked of me.」

In that very moment, Han Su-Yeong's lips began trembling.

As pulsing migraine assaulted her, sentences above the wall flashed past her brain.

「"Hey."

"Yes?"

"If, by chance, something happens to me, then you…"

.

.

.

.

"Please don't say things like that."

"If you really see me as your 'god', then……"」

A middle-aged man wearing a fedora was looking up at her with a

committed, loyal look on his face.

「"Protect that guy, no matter what."」

The existence that knew the 'Ways of Survival' just as well as the original author, herself.

The existence that remained even more indifferent to the tragedies of this world than her, and…

And, the existence that lived for the sole purpose of 'completing the story'.

「The existence that opened the 'scenario' in this world, and the one who connected the two world-lines as one.」

[The 4th Wall] spoke up instead of Han Su-Yeong's trembling lips.

「D on t be so su rpri sed ev en I rea lis ed it ju st now」

"What did you say?"

「I al so di dn't kn ow who I w as」

There were some existences without a fleshed-out past that had to simply 'exist' until belatedly, they were permitted to acquire their histories. Beings that didn't 'exist' until the author decided to give them a backstory.

「I be ca me com ple te be cau se of y o u」

The scenes from the moments when the 'paid service' got underway brushed past her mind. The moment when the two world-lines of reality and fiction became one, and the 1863rd turn's Dokkaebi King standing right in the middle.

「W h y I ha d to bec ome a w a l l di vid ing the wo rld」

The Dokkaebi King became the wall that divided the world.

「W h y I ha d to pro tec t Kim Dok Ja」

And then, it carried out the last favour its 'god' had asked of it.

「Y o u di dn't re mem ber m e」

The existence that repeated one single story for a long, long time, and the one who became addicted to that story, constantly lusting after it.

The existence that had read the 'Ways of Survival' even before Kim Dok-Ja did, was right before her eyes.

This world's most ancient reader.

「I too di dn't re mem ber y o u」

The Dokkaebi King filled the void left behind by Han Su-Yeong and became this world's chronicler.

「T hi s st ory is n o w mine」

And eventually, it succeeded in completing the story.

"It was I who asked you in the first place. So, stop this right now."

The existence that continued to uphold an order for a very long time had eventually become the order itself.

「Y o u are not my g o d any mo re」

She who had lost her position as the original author was no longer the creator, as well.

Han Su-Yeong stared at her own fingertips. The 'Ways of Survival' her other self had written went on to become a novel spanning 3149 chapters. That novel left her hands and reached its reader.

"You're right, this world's god is no longer me, but the reader."

That would be Kim Dok-Ja beyond this spinning circle, slumbering and dreaming away in eternity.

"So, let's ask that god, then. Let's ask if he really wishes to remain in this place, or……!"

Han Su-Yeong swallowed a Life and Death Pill and righted her broken knee. And then, she walked forward step by step before extending her hands.

"……Or, if he wants to get out of here with us."

Blinding sparks of flames exploded on the tips of her hands.

As if to reject her approach, the spinning circle's speed grew faster and faster. Blood splattered from both of her hands. Not even Fables could protect her. However, even while suffering from the cruel pain akin to her hands being grounded into fine dust, Han Su-Yeong didn't stop.

"Kim Dok-Ja! Say something!"

There were some people who, despite wishing to be saved, couldn't bring themselves to ask others to save them.

Han Su-Yeong always wanted to write certain sentences for people like that. To write sentences for those people who couldn't say or write anything.

Just like how it always had been for her, all she could do was to write 'sentences'.

But, as long as she could cross over to the other side of this circle…

As long as she could get rid of this full stop, then…

「The idiot that unquestioningly took the lemon candy offered as a joke and sucked on it.」

"Kim Dok-Ja!"

Unfortunately, it wasn't enough.

She couldn't reach the other side of the wall with only the sentences she possessed.

It was then, yet another hand was laid on top of Han Su-Yeong's.

It was Yu Sang-Ah.

Mandalas were unfurled on both sides of her as she began loading her Fable. While wiping away the blood trickling down her nose, she smiled weakly.

"Dok-Ja-ssi."

「The man who hid in the cabinet alone to read the 'Ways of Survival'.」

Yu Sang-Ah's sentences were now calling out to Kim Dok-Ja.

As if they were grabbing at a door knob, their hands reached out and grabbed the spinning circle. However, the circle's speed didn't decrease in the slightest. They were still short on the sentences. But then, hands from two more people were laid on top of the two women's.

"I shall hold onto the inside!"

"I'm on the left!"

Jeong Hui-Won and Yi Hyeon-Seong letting out a loud, spirited yell began clinging onto the circle as well.

「The man who silently listened to the boring stories from the military.」

Yi Hyeon-Seong yelling out unleashed his Fable, and Jeong Hui-Won next to him matched his timing.

「Stinking stubborn mull of a damned troublemaker.」

"Dok-Ja-ssi! Answer us! You can hear us, right??"

And now, Yi Seol-Hwa and Gong Pil-Du added their hands next.

「The man who searched for medicinal herbs throughout the night for the sake of his companions.」

「The bastard who stole all of my lands.」

"Ahjussi!"

"Hyung!"

The two kids also rushed in. The small hands of Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong were placed on Han Su-Yeong's one at a time.

「The man who always lied to reassure someone else.」

「However, the man who wasn't very good at lying.」

Right behind them was Yi Ji-Hye wielding her sword. She used her fists to slam into the circle. She hit it, then hit it again and again.

"I can't say something that cringy, anyway! So, just come out already!!"

「Squid ahjussi.」

Different memories of everyone from different time and place – all those sentences of every single moment gathered together and wished for one Kim Dok-Ja.

However, the full stop still didn't want to budge even after the companions called out.

No, only their hands ended up as a bloody mess.

Their Fables were being extinguished now. And then, a sentence floated up above the full stop.

「Maybe it's just our greed, wanting to save him?」

"Shut up!"

「Maybe, he's not an existence needing to be saved?」

The companions also knew it – knew that this action of theirs could be a meaningless one.

That was why they wanted to know.

To ask.

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To reach out, and confirm.

"Kim Dok-Ja! I know you're in there!" Jang Ha-Yeong shouted out. "We talked about this, didn't we?! Even if we can't reach each other, even if we can't meet, we gotta keep pounding on the wall until the end, right?? Even if the wall would never open up, we agreed to keep writing something on it, didn't we?!"

Even if we can't reach each other, even if we can't meet each other, we should continue to pound away on each other's walls.

Even if that wall would never open up, keep writing something on that wall, anyway.

"When we do that, then maybe, someone might end up seeing our words someday……!"

Then maybe, just maybe, you might finally want to come out of that place.

"Please! Say something! Anything! Please-!"

And so, Jang Ha-Yeong's palm slammed into the full stop. And in the very next moment…

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is revealing its power!]

The full stop began to shake little by little. For the first time ever, [The 4th Wall]'s aura changed.

「Y o u da re」

Yu Sang-Ah didn't miss this opening and shouted out. "Dok-Ja-ssi! We promised to meet during the next life, didn't we?!"

['Wall That Decides Samsara' is revealing its capability!]

Yi Gil-Yeong also shouted out as if he didn't want to lose. "Hyung, you always think you are at fault for everything!"

Jeong Hui-Won carried on where the boy's words ended. "I don't care whether you're good or evil, Dok-Ja-ssi! I don't plan on judging you according to the standards of this world. That's why…!"

['Wall That Divides Good and Evil' is revealing its theme!]

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"……So, please open this door!"

Right next moment, a powerful rebound coming out from the door blew away the companions.

The cacophony of loud exploding noises utterly deafened them. Once the ringing in their ears went away, only the cold silence remained in the surroundings.

The injured companions got up one by one. Before Yi Hyeon-Seong could say something, though, Han Su-Yeong hurriedly placed a finger on her lips.

Just like the way faint, soft drizzle moistened the parched ground, a quiet little noise could be heard.

Knock.

That noise, it was coming from beyond the full stop.

A place beyond the completion of the story.

Han Su-Yeong was the first to hear that sound.

Knock, knock……

The sound so small and so weak, yet still undoubtedly letting others know of his presence there.

「There he was.」

Shin Yu-Seung broke down in tears.

「Someone was knocking on the door from beyond it.」

Han Su-Yeong rushed forward, followed right after by Yu Sang-Ah. Yi Hyeon-Seong and Jeong Hui-Won laid their hands on top of the two women's, again. Yi Seol-Hwa quickly healed the companions' wounded hands, while Gong Pil-Du threw his own weight behind them. To fight against the rebound, Yi Ji-Hye stabbed her sword on the floor, while Jang Ha-Yeong supported Han Su-Yeong's body. Fables from Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong then began protecting Han Su-Yeong's hands.

"Focus all of your powers in one spot!"

Along with the loud 'Kwa-gagagagak!' noise, their hands were grounded to bloody dust again.

The full stop's spinning speed was slowing down. Bit by agonising bit, the worn-down surface of the full stop began developing cracks.

「Their Fable was not enough.」

The full stop's size was gradually shrinking down. It continued to get

smaller, as if to never permit their entry in this place. It was then, some people suddenly intruded into the subway.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is incarnating!]

They were two members of who had not revealed themselves up until now.

[My apologies for showing up late.]

One of them was the queen of the Underworld, Persephone. And the other was…

"……Dok-Ja-yah."

Rather than looking at the full stop, Yi Su-Gyeong was now looking at at the other Kim Dok-Ja plopped down on the floor. He looked back at her in a daze, but then, bit down hard on his lip and grabbed onto her hand.

Fables then began flooding out from both Yi Su-Gyeong and Persephone.

Two Kim Dok-Jas existed for them.

「Kim Dok-Ja before the start of the scenario, and Kim Dok-Ja after the scenario got underway.」

Two beings that had observed 'Kim Dok-Ja' longer than anyone else supported his Avatar and approached the full stop. Han Su-Yeong nodded her head.

「The one who imprisoned Kim Dok-Ja inside the wall was himself.」

"Kim Dok-Ja."

Han Su-Yeong realised something as she witnessed his eyelashes

tremble weakly. No matter how deeply her novel had influenced Kim Dok-Ja, he was not the 'Ways of Survival'. No matter how well she understood the 'Ways of Survival', it didn't automatically mean she understood Kim Dok-Ja.

She might be able to write sentences for someone else, but she certainly couldn't read those words in their stead. No, the role of reading was left up to the god of the new world, the reader.

“……Help us."

Kim Dok-Ja's hand touched the full stop.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu……!

['The 4th Wall' is increasing its thickness even more!]

Hands were laid on top of hands. [The 4th Wall] was shouting out at them.

「Y o u lot mu st fa il h ere」

「T hi s sto ry h as b een com ple ted th is way al rea dy」

Was it forbidden to change a complete story?

Was it forbidden for a single universe to even dare think about being saved just because the rest of the universes were completed in unhappiness?

Han Su-Yeong wrapped Kim Dok-Ja's hand laid on top of hers tightly and began crying.

The memories from the 1863rd turn were going on a rampage.

「This story will cycle itself.」

Yet another Han Su-Yeong would repeat the 1863rd turn inside this cycle.

Kim Dok-Ja and Han Su-Yeong wouldn't recognise each other and start fighting again.

Yu Jung-Hyeok would continue with his regressions.

And to save them all, Kim Dok-Ja would become the 'Most Ancient Dream' many, many times.

The vast, indescribable time would cycle over and over again, leading them to reach and meet one another, only to part ways again.

Enduring the innumerable lengths of time to meet, then meet again, and create stories.

And with that, this story might become truly complete.

However, if that was the case, just when would they ever be able to taste happiness?

「It's fine if the story is imperfect.」

Han Su-Yeong's hands powerfully gripped onto the circle's crack.

The surface of the gripped wall began tearing apart.

「If that story can make someone happy, then… 」

The companions' fables crumbled as an incredible storm exploded. Kim Dok-Ja's coat was ripped apart, and their weapons shattered to bits and pieces. The blindingly-pure rays of light blanketed their view. Within this incredible explosion of light, Han Su-Yeong thought to herself. [The 4th Wall] was right, the 'Ways of Survival' was indeed now over. With his own hands, he brought it to its conclusion.

However, that didn't mean Kim Dok-Ja's story had come to an end there, either.

Ku-gugugugu……

Eventually, the storm died down, revealing the messed-up hands of the companions.

Hands, laid on top of each other as if they had fused into one. And these hands had destroyed the 'completed' full stop. The crack ran

down on the circle's edge like a tear.

「It now resembled a comma.」

The door was open.

Fin.

An explosion rang out on the field of snow.

Yu Jung-Hyeok swung the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and smacked away the

'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss', before climbing on the roof of the subway train.

That explosion just now, it sounded suspicious. Did something happen inside the train?

[Dammit! There are just too many!]

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon fighting off the Hounds blew his top

in anger. There didn't seem to be an end to these black hounds rushing in at them from all sides.

The Great Sage continuously throwing down lightning bolts to scorch the hounds could only mutter on in an exhausted voice. [… I don't want to admit this, but I'm still ways off from comparing against the people from 999th turn.]

Yet another explosion noise went off from inside the subway. Yu Jung-Hyeok reflexively turned his head in that direction. What could those be? From the front car of the train, bits and pieces of what resembled Fables began leaking out.

It was also right then that some things were spat out of the hole on the train along with the loud 'Ku-gugugu!' noise.

Uriel freaked out and shouted at him. [Yu Jung-Hyeok! Dodge it!]

Right next second, hounds being ejected from the train blanketed Yu Jung-Hyeok like a black cloud.

*

Pah-susu……

Black bits scattered about. With the comma-shaped hole as the centre, the door before their eyes was disappearing.

Han Su-Yeong pushed herself off the floor and looked to the front. Letters were strewn about near the cabin door leading to the 3807 train car.

「I also」

「With you all」

The moment she saw those words that couldn't yet become sentences,

Han Su-Yeong realised just what knocked on the door from the other side. They were Fables – very small fragments of Kim Dok-Ja. Her eyes chased after the line of fallen fragments. The closer she got to the centre of the cabin, the greater the number of Fable fragments fallen on the floor.

「Kim Dok-Ja was there.」

Kim Dok-Ja's body, now as small as a young child, was floating up in the middle of the cabin. His eyes were closed, and he seemed unconscious. Rays of entrancing light were being emitted by his figure that continued to shed blinding Fable fragments. These fragments went through the subway's windows and drifted off to the destination unknown.

"Ah……?"

Kim Dok-Ja's Avatar next to Han Su-Yeong gasped out. His eyes were trembling as if he was shocked. Then, he began approaching the young Kim Dok-Ja.

"Ah… Ah, I'm……"

The moment he said that, a powerful suction force began pulling him in. Some kind of power was summoning him back. The Avatar's body began breaking down bit by bit.

Those broken bits were then sucked into the main body.

His gaze looking back met Han Su-Yeong's. She reached out unbeknownst even to herself.

"Grab him!"

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However, her hand couldn't touch him. The rate of the Avatar breaking down and getting sucked in grew faster. The bits of fragments from the Avatar brushed past her hand – some words were

caught in Han Su-Yeong's fingers.

「I'm sorry」

Just what was he sorry about? Kim Dok-Ja's Avatar scattering away like an apparition emitted bright light as he got sucked into the main body. However, despite it absorbing all of the Avatar's Fables, Kim Dok-Ja's body didn't grow back up again. No, the amount of Fables flooding out from him increased, instead.

"Kim Dok-Ja!!"

Han Su-Yeong instinctively realised it. They needed to stop that. Otherwise, they would lose him forever.

Her muscles tightly wound up released like a spring. And so, just as Han Su-Yeong tried to approach Kim Dok-Ja floating in the air…

Kwa-aaaaaaah!

「Y o u c ant go fu rth er」

Accompanied by a loud explosion noise, powerful gusts of wind suddenly blew in and something exploded out from Kim Dok-Ja's body. His Fables were overflowing wildly.

Sentences flooding out like black tides blanketed the entirety of the cabin and swallowed Han Su-Yeong up.

"Everyone, be careful!"

She was forced back mercilessly along with sensations of her skin being swept away.

Kim Dok-Ja was getting further away. She urgently looked around, but there was not a thing she could grab onto. Even though she unleashed the Status of a Constellation and borrowed the powers of Great Fables, she had no method to defend against this surging torrent.

"Kim Dok-Ja! Sto……!"

Sentences escaping from Kim Dok-Ja's body scratched past her entire figure.

Sentences a man used to endure his life – the despair created by one person's life. The

tidal waves of letters completely blanketing every direction resembled the darkest of the darkest night.

The 'Kim Dok-Ja' she understood was merely just the tip of an iceberg. Han Su-Yeong was overwhelmed in an instant and was helplessly shoved back, unable to say anything.

It was Yu Sang-Ah who supported her back, though. "Get yourself together!"

Kim Dok-Ja's figure could be spied among the gaps of the letters.

Yi Ji-Hye shouted out. "…… He's a kid?! Why did ahjussi become like that?!"

"Hyung!"

"Everyone, gather around!"

To fight against the tidal wave, the companions hurdled together. Unfortunately, even that was not enough. They were kept pushed back again and again. At this rate, not only would they be forced outside the cabin, but get ejected from the train itself sooner rather than later.

It was then, someone spread open his entire figure and stood to block the exit.

"Hu-aaaaahp! I shall support you all!"

It was Yi Hyeon-Seong.

Accompanied by "Kwa-dududuk!" noise, he activated the [Steel Transformation]. His arms and legs assimilated with the metal of the exit and caught the companions like a net. With a pained face, Yi Hyeon-Seong watched Kim Dok-Ja's Fable brushing past his body.

「To Yi Hyeon-Seong, Kim Dok-Ja was too difficult.」

The act of understanding someone started off with admitting that you didn't know anything about that person. Yi Hyeon-Seong bit down on his lip hard enough to draw blood and shouted out. "I can only hold on for a little while! Hurry!"

Gong Pil-Du quickly summoned his Armed Fortress and supported Yi Hyeon-Seong

from behind. He then shouted out. "If I help, we can endure for a bit longer! So, hurry up and rescue that fool!"

The companions looked at each other.

"Hold each other's hands, everyone!" Jeong Hui-Won grabbed onto Yi Hyeon-Seong with one hand, and extended the other. "Unleash your Fables all at once!"

That outstretched hand was held by Yi Seol-Hwa, then Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong held on to her other hand. The hands of two children were then connected to Yi Ji-Hye.

Persephone, as well as Yi Su-Gyeong, followed them right after.

"Kim Dok-Ja! Wake up!!"

Jang Ha-Yeong grabbed Yi Su-Gyeong's hand and cried out, while Yu Sang-Ah caught her extended hand next.

"Su-Yeong-ssi!"

The last person to grab the outstretched hand was Han Su-Yeong.

“……I got you."

[Great Fable, 'One Who Rebels Against Fate', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The Great Fable that connected the companions as one began resisting against the vicious storm.

Like a buoy in the stormy sea, Han Su-Yeong's body helplessly rocked from side to side.

She could hold on only because of her companions behind her.

The companions tightly held each other's hands within the crashing waves of the letters, as if they were trying to save a drowning man.

Jeong Hui-Won shouted towards Kim Dok-Ja, ever so faintly visible to her. "Dok-Ja-ssi!

We're here! Just hold on for a little bit longer!"

The companions holding onto each other's hands were like sturdy sentences connected as one. Han Su-Yeong felt the warmth transmitted in her hand and gradually realised something.

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Words existed to describe the depths of the darkness. And to console such darkness, the thing called 'story' was created.

"Kim Dok-Ja!"

The tightly-held hands, supported by the sentences shoring up other sentences. While entrusting herself to that hand, Han Su-Yeong approached Kim Dok-Ja one step at a time. Only his face could barely be seen as the rest was covered by the darkness of the letters.

「Wh at y o u are do ing is me aning l ess」

The waves grew more and more vicious as [The 4th Wall]'s voice resounded out.

「Th ere is o n e Kim Dok Ja」

Han Su-Yeong knew the reason – the reason why that Kim Dok-Ja was getting smaller.

The younger face of him right now resembled the 'Most Ancient Dream' they saw some time ago.

He'd lose the memories of the days he spent with his companions, and…

…And, he'd even lose the memories of when he read the 'Ways of Survival'.

Then, he'd become the purest child after returning to the universe's great cycle.

Later on, he'd get rescued by the 'Secretive Plotter'.

If that was the case, what would happen to the 'Kim Dok-Ja' they remembered?

"We've managed to come this far, so this……!!"

Han Su-Yeong reached out as pain of her hand burning away assaulted her.

Kim Dok-Ja was right before her eyes.

「The one and only reader who could understand this story.」

That Kim Dok-Ja was right over there.

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There were less than four metres between them, yet to Han Su-Yeong, this distance came across as an infinite margin that nothing could fill. As if an invisible wall was standing before her and Kim Dok-Ja.

"You son of a bitch! You promised to read my novel, didn't you?!"

She wanted to tell him. Tell him that there was a world that didn't

need his sacrifice to be saved. She thought that, if it was her, she should be able to do it.

Because, she was most proficient at lying than anyone alive, after all.

"What the hell is this 'Ways of Survival', anyway?! I can easily create dozens, hundreds of worlds of illusions!"

Her shouting voice was gradually losing its strength.

She had written so many sentences until now, yet she was still unable to save a single person.

Within the world growing dizzier, Kim Dok-Ja's figure was getting blurrier.

What would it have been like if only she was just a little bit stronger? Maybe, they didn't plan this out properly. Maybe, she should've learned an even stronger attribute.

Maybe, she should've earned a much, much harsher Fable.

She shouldn't have abandoned Kim Dok-Ja from the get-go. She should've cottoned onto Kim Dok-Ja's plan sooner. No, maybe…

…She shouldn't have written the 'Ways of Survival' in the first place.

She shouldn't have become an author of such a story.

…An author?

Han Su-Yeong abruptly raised her head.

「Could she do it?」

It was uncertain.

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「No, I can do it.」

Someone else was saying that in her stead.

Memories of the 1863rd turn became a Fable and began to violently writhe around.

Han Su-Yeong looked down at her own fingertips. Her fingers, scorched black like charcoal.

She was not a protagonist, but a writer.

Han Su-Yeong's hand, looking as if gripping a pen, began to slowly move. They created trajectories in the air; these trajectories went to become letters, and those letters soon became words.

[Your attribute is being pushed to its absolute limit!]

[Warning! You do not have the authority of 'Overwrite'!]

Han Su-Yeong vomited out a mouthful of blood, but didn't stop.

From the very onset, an author really had only one way to reach her reader.

「Han Su-Yeong imagined. Just like how the other her did once upon a time.」

With the most vigorous, carefully worded sentences, she began drawing out a man's hands, his arms, and his legs.

An individual created solely for the sake of one reader. An entity tougher in body and nobler in heart than any creature in this world. The man who managed to bring down all the stars in the skies to end his truly lengthy regression turns, and eventually, even succeeding in destroying the system of the world.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchu-!!

Every character was, as a matter of fact, an incarnation of the author.

However, that didn't mean the incarnation was the author itself. The characters that left her hands wouldn't listen to her, after all.

And that was why Han Su-Yeong was trying to get the help from the individual she had

created.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', is unleashing all of her Fables!]

[Your new Stigma is blooming!]

That one term that could fill up that empty margin.

Han Su-Yeong shouted out as if she was screaming. "Yu Jung-Hyeok-!!"

And right next second, the letters before her eyes split apart.

The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Secret Technique: Inner Mystery Transmission.

Split the Dark Ocean.

A single sword split apart the pitch-black night ocean. The fighting spirit of a Transcender bursting out from the entirety of his body illuminated the darkness of the letters.

[Stigma, 'Character Summon', is activating!]

The individual she had written, but she didn't know of.

[Character, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', is answering the call!]

"Hold on tight."

A man descended with the rays of light. Yu Jung-Hyeok's powerful hand grabbed hers.

Han Su-Yeong endured against her eyes tearing up and shouted back at him.

"You hold on tight, instead!"

From Yi Hyeon-Seong to Yu Jung-Hyeok, the companions' Fable began to glow brightly.

To get this far, they had lost many things.

"Jung-Hyeok-ssi! We leave it in your hands!"

"Master! Hurry!"

However, it wasn't as if they had been losing things only.

Yu Jung-Hyeok extended his hand out.

The distance of just one person. The distance that couldn't have been bridged without the presence of just one person was finally being closed in.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's hand reached out while breaking past the letters. The sentences protecting Kim Dok-Ja fell away one by one.

The hand that experienced thousands of regressions tightly grabbed hold onto Kim Dok-Ja's collars – as if to yank out the oldest memories from within.

"It's time to go back, Kim Dok-Ja."

Right next second – as if the lights were turned off, the whole world was suddenly plunged in darkness.

Fin.

Within the space of darkness, as if the curtains had come down on the last act.

Han Su-Yeong opened her eyes within this darkness. The [Eye of Truth] expanded and began emitting faint rays of light, and gradually, she could see her surroundings better.

…Just what happened?

[You have misaligned and broke the world-line's deciding Probability!]

[Your actions have affected the 'Most Ancient Dream's' ■■!]

[The 'Most Ancient Dream's' ■■ is changing!]

Then, indecipherable messages floated up next.

But none of that mattered. What's important was rescuing Kim Dok-Ja.

Han Su-Yeong focused her sight to the presence she picked up in front of her. When she did, something sooty, darkish could be spotted.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok, is that you?"

"Yes."

Han Su-Yeong felt around like a blind and approached him, only to freak out and shout loudly. "Hey, you moron! What the hell are you doing, choking a little kid?!"

"This is not a little kid. It's Kim Dok-Ja."

"It's kid-ified Kim Dok-Ja!"

She hurriedly snatched Kim Dok-Ja away from him and brought her finger closer to the small nose. She felt a very faint, shallow breathing.

But why was this? Something about his current state felt wrong. Just what was up with this feeling that he might shatter into pieces at any second……?

"What's wrong with him?"

"His Fable has been damaged too extensively. I've already fed him the Life and Death Pill, but… It's not working."

They needed Yi Seol-Hwa. However, none of the presences of their companions could be felt nearby. It seemed that only Yu Jung-Hyeok, Kim Dok-Ja, and herself were trapped within this separate space.

With hostile eyes, Han Su-Yeong glared at her surroundings. There was only one culprit capable of doing something like this.

"The 4th Wall! Stop this and let us leave!"

Along with 'Tsu-chuchut' noise, a faint, blurry silhouette appeared within the darkness.

A boy Dokkaebi wearing a fedora was standing there. Its face was filled with indescribable sadness and purity.

Han Su-Yeong studied [The 4th Wall] for a little while, before asking it. "…… Is that your real appearance?"

「T hat s ri ght」

It no longer resembled the figure she had spied within her memories.

Not a sign of a middle-aged Dokkaebi could be seen on that face. [The 4th Wall] addressed her.

「A rea lly l o n g ti me ha s pas sed by」

Han Su-Yeong thought about something. Maybe [The 4th Wall] was in the same boat as Kim Dok-Ja. It too could have forgotten everything and gradually turned into a child while enduring the untold length of time.

While fixing Kim Dok-Ja's clothing, Han Su-Yeong asked. "You were protecting Kim Dok-Ja because of my order, weren't you?"

「I th ink I w as」

"You gave Kim Dok-Ja the 'Ways of Survival' text files, right? You kept helping him out afterwards, too."

[The 4th Wall] didn't reply. No, it just stared at Kim Dok-Ja with vague eyes of someone digging through very old memories.

Han Su-Yeong's voice now took on the subtle hint of anger. "But, why did you let Kim Dok-Ja end up in this state?"

「…… 」

"Say something! What were you even thinking to let……"

「You don't know what the reader really wants.」

[The 4th Wall] no longer stammered its words.

「You all truly, truly do not know anything.」

"……We'll be taking Kim Dok-Ja with us. We can't sit back and watch this guy live his life as the 'Most Ancient Dream'."

At her attitude of willing to start a fight, [The 4th Wall]'s brows

quivered. But rather than Han Su-Yeong clenching her fist in nervousness, Yu Jung-Hyeok stepped forward, instead.

"If we take him with us, will the position of the 'Most Ancient Dream' be left vacant?"

Han Su-Yeong's shoulders flinched.

It wasn't as if she had never thought about that problem.

The problem of 'after Kim Dok-Ja is rescued, who will take over the position of the Most Ancient Dream?'

This world was maintained solely because the 'Most Ancient Dream' dreamed. In a universe operated only through someone's sacrifice, someone had to become the existence who dreamed.

Yu Jung-Hyeok opened his mouth. "I shall take over."

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"What the?! Hey! What bullshit are you spewing now?!"

"I'm trying to say that I will become the new 'Most Ancient Dream'."

"How can you pull that off when you don't even have an iota of imagination?! No, let me do it. I can do it so much better than this Kim Dok-Ja here. That's why……"

Han Su-Yeong yapped on and on, even though she didn't really understand what her mouth was saying. She simply blurted out only with the aim of stopping this crazy idiot. And fortunately enough, [The 4th Wall] wasn't Yu Jung-Hyeok's ally in this case, either.

「Puppet of the 'Most Ancient Dream', you can't become the dream. Because, you don't love this story.」

"In that case, I must-"

「It's the same story for you, Han Su-Yeong.」

"Then who's going to take over this guy's role? I'm telling you this right now, but we're definitely taking him with us, you hear? Even if it's you, you can't stop us."

[The 4th Wall] stared at Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok for a little while.

「Take him.」

"What's that?"

「You can just take him. Even if you take away 'that Kim Dok-Ja', this universe won't be destroyed anymore.」

As she didn't expect to hear such a reply, Han Su-Yeong could only blink her eyes like an idiot. She glanced to her side, and even Yu Jung-Hyeok was making a similar face.

Just what was the Dokkaebi saying here? She had never thought of such an ending.

Was it really okay to welcome a conclusion of this nature?

…No, that simply wasn't possible.

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This was never considerate towards any of them before, not even once.

Han Su-Yeong's face gradually hardened and she asked back. "Why won't the universe be destroyed even after we take him away?"

「The 'Kim Dok-Ja' you know has scattered to the rest of the universe already.」

"What was that??"

She dazedly stared at Kim Dok-Ja currently embraced in her arms – at his frail figure, small enough for only one of her arms to wrap around.

It felt like a hammer had struck her on the back of her head. It couldn't be, the reason why Kim Dok-Ja ended up in this state was…

"You… Just what the hell did you do?"

「This wasn't my doing. It's what he himself wanted. After all, he knew your group would do something like this.」

A subtle chill began running down her skin.

In order to save this world, someone must become the 'Most Ancient Dream'. If Kim Dok-Ja was saved, then someone else must replace him.

Wouldn't he… Would someone like Kim Dok-Ja really not know that?

「You all have done something terribly stupid. The conclusion the reader wanted was the only conclusion. Why did you try to change it?」

The expression of [The 4th Wall] staring at her gave her the creeps. A negative emotion that was neither hatred or resentment, not even sadness, was now directed in her and Yu Jung-Hyeok's direction.

「You shouldn't have been greedy. No, y o u sh oul d've be en con te nt wi th 49% Kim Dok Ja」

Along with the voice gradually breaking apart, the surrounding time and space began to distort.

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「D id y o u re ally thi nk y o ur gro up w as spe cial? D id yo u hon es tly bel ieve th at a pro per con clusion wo uld wa it for y o u lot wh en

y o u de str oyed the laws of th is uni ver se? 」

Even before she could reply, the surroundings grew brighter.

「 Y o u lot ha ve me ss ed up y o ur con clu sion, and y o u wi ll no w be com e mi se ra ble 」

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When Han Su-Yeong opened her eyes again, she found herself standing in Seoul –

Gwanghwamun of the 1865th regression turn. The very location where her group readied for the scenario. Snow was drifting down on this landmark that had seen the last conclusion of the scenarios. She quietly looked up at the snowflakes falling one by one.

She slowly lowered her gaze and saw the small Kim Dok-Ja, still nestled within her embrace. His breathing remained rhythmic.

"Master!"

Yi Ji-Hye ran towards them from a distance. Even Yu Sang-Ah and Jeong Hui-Won urgently running next to her could be seen, too. The rest of the companions were safe.

"Su-Yeong-ssi! What about Dok-Ja-ssi?"

Even before Han Su-Yeong could say something, Jang Ha-Yeong quickly snatched away and hugged Kim Dok-Ja. "Kim Dok-Ja! His hand, it's as cold as ice! Does anyone have gloves??"

The companions quickly surrounded Kim Dok-Ja. Each of them was drunk in their own emotions.

Jeong Hui-Won holding onto Kim Dok-Ja's pale smooth cheeks were crying, while Yi

Hyeon-Seong and his bear-like bulk were cautiously wrapping Kim Dok-Ja's naked feet. Even Yu Sang-Ah couldn't hold back her tears this time. Both Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong seemed to be moments away from passing out, too.

The figure of Gong Pil-Du sitting on a nearby bench could be seen, busy puffing away at his cigarette as if such a spectacle was too ridiculous to even participate.

“……Is Dok-Ja sleeping now?"

Yi Su-Gyeong asked that, and Han Su-Yeong nodded as her reply. That small movement was all she could do after squeezing out every dollop of her remaining energy.

Companions finally managed to rein in their emotions and began to talk in turns. The first one to step up while rolling up her sleeves was Jeong Hui-Won.

"I'm really going to dangle him up this time. Right in front of the Industrial Complex, no less! I'm not joking here, so all of you, do not try to stop me!"

"Even still, the current Dok-Ja-ssi is a child……”

"By the way, will ahjussi remain in this state forever?"

"Hyung, wake up, please! You're pretending to be asleep because of how embarrassed you are, right?"

"Did he get younger as a side effect of something?"

Yi Ji-Hye hesitating ever so slightly suddenly shouted out in a bright voice. "Who cares if he got younger? We can just raise him, right?!"

"Does that mean I can go to the same school as hyung?"

"Hey, you think ahjussi really became a little kid like you?!"

And so, for the next couple of minutes, they bickered and bantered like this. In the meantime, Yi Seol-Hwa was checking out Kim Dok-Ja's current condition throughout his body, but as she did, her expression was slowly hardening.

"When Dok-Ja ahjussi wakes up, he's going to remember us, right? It won't be like, he's lost most of his memories or anything?"

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「Han Su-Yeong couldn't say a single thing to such companions.」

She kept bobbing her lips up and down many, many times.

It wasn't a certainty yet, they couldn't trust everything that stinking wall said, that's why they…

"……You two. Why have you been keeping quiet until now?"

Han Su-Yeong hurriedly avoided meeting the gaze after hearing Yu Sang-Ah's question.

"Su-Yeong-ssi?"

Soon afterwards, Yu Sang-Ah's gaze shifted over to Yu Jung-Hyeok. And then, she got to witness a shocking scene.

"……Yu Jung-Hyeok-ssi??"

Yu Jung-Hyeok's expression was frozen pale-white. And as if he had lost a protective wall of his mind, he seemed to be muttering something to himself, too.

Yu Sang-Ah had seen such a sight before.

「Back in the 73rd Demon World, when Kim Dok-Ja ceased to exist alongside the

'Outer God'.」

She quickly brushed past the companions and held Kim Dok-Ja's wrist. It was so frail that it might break at any second. The pulse itself was faint, too. However, she wasn't a doctor so this didn't tell her much. She asked Yi Seol-Hwa next.

"Seol-Hwa-ssi, the current Dok-Ja-ssi, what's wro……"

"……His soul has been completely damaged."

His soul was damaged.

In that moment, a similar type of shadow was cast over the companions' complexions.

However, that didn't last long. Jeong Hui-Won spoke up first.

"I'm sure there is a way, right? I mean, we cured something like that before."

Indeed, they had experienced a similar event to this in the past.

The damage to one's soul meant damage to one's Fable – damage to one's 'theme'. Yi Su-Gyeong had survived such an illness before.

Shin Yu-Seung hurriedly followed that up. "There really is no problem, right? It's not the same as back then! We can get help from this world's Aileen. And we also secured a lot of star fluid ahead of time too, didn't we?!"

Shin Yu-Seung continued to speak. She brought up all the ways she could think of without rest, over and over again. And then…

"……That's why, that's why……"

Tears formed on both of her eyes.

Shin Yu-Seung continued to shake her head in denial, saying this couldn't be it. Yu Sang-Ah cautiously wrapped her arm around the girl's shoulders and spoke.

"Please be honest with us, Seol-Hwa-ssi."

Yi Seol-Hwa dropped her head lower, and placed her hand on Kim

Dok-Ja's chest.

When she did, a small piece of Fable fragment floated up from his frail-looking chest.

That was the last remaining Fable of Kim Dok-Ja.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', has reached his new ■■.]

His small Fable glimmered like a very tiny phrase.

[Constellation Demon King of Salvation's ■■ is 'Epilogue'.]

「And so, they had reached the epilogue no one had written.」

Fin.

They immediately took Kim Dok-Ja back to their headquarters located in Gwanghwamun.

Aileen was summoned, and they even requested aid from the Constellations with expertise in medicine, such as 'Guam Divine

Doctor'.

「Their plan was perfect. With this plan, they couldn't have failed.」

They even called upon every Fable expert scattered throughout the world, too.

「This plan was the one where they couldn't afford to fail.」

For the period of over a week, dozens of famed doctors were brought in to treat Kim Dok-Ja. It was to collect the remaining Fables somehow and restore his soul form.

- There is nothing that can be done currently.

Yi Seol-Hwa worked throughout the night and as a result, passed out. A Russian expert subbing for her afterwards said these words.

- We can't say he's dead, but… We also can't say that he's alive, either. This child will never wake up again, that's why.

But, that couldn't be. They worked tirelessly and finally managed to come this far, so this story simply couldn't end like this. The one to stay as the pillar of support for the crumbling companions was Yu Sang-Ah.

"The problem is with Dok-Ja-ssi's soul, yes?"

In that case, they only needed to restore his soul, then.

So, the companions sought out the assistance of the Constellation most well versed in everything soul-related.

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[This child's soul didn't come to the 'Underworld'. No, his soul didn't go to any of the afterlives found in the other worldviews.]

The queen of the Underworld, Persephone, could only stroke Kim Dok-

Ja's forehead with a sorrowful expression.

[…This was this child's choice.]

"His choice?! Please don't make me laugh. You also saw it too, didn't you? Back in that subway, we all saw the Fables Dok-Ja-ssi possessed, didn't we?! He, he wanted to be with us, he wanted to us to save…!"

[There are countless Fables within a person's soul. The words we saw were simply a small part of that.]

"Don't… Don't say something like that as if it means nothing."

Jeong Hui-Won shouted out. There was no other way for her to endure except to shout.

It was his choice? This, this was Kim Dok-Ja's choice??

「The companions didn't give up.」

Even the collecting of Fables, even the recovery of his soul, they were impossible. In that case, only one method remained.

[I was waiting for you.]

The master of the 'Isle of Reincarnators', Sakyamuni, welcomed them with a benevolent smile – as if he knew they would come here.

[It's truly lamentable, but he's not someone this one can reincarnate.]

"A portion of his soul still remains. We can divide and share the Fables we all possess.

Just like how I did it back then, if we utilise the powers of samsara……"

[Ah, my dear arhat. I understand your sorrow. I do. However, he can't be reincarnated.]

Sakyamuni looked at Yu Sang-Ah with a regretful expression before letting a soft sigh escape from his lips.

Soon, a truly countless number of threads began floating up before his eyes that observed Kim Dok-Ja quietly slumbering away. There were so many of these red threads that counting them all was impossible. Yu Sang-Ah too could see them.

The threads of fate.

The threads stretched out to the night sky and eventually, even pierced through itself. Yu Sang-Ah stared at them, and realised why Kim Dok-Ja couldn't be reincarnated.

“……I see."

She didn't want to acknowledge it. Even then, the truth didn't change.

"His soul, it… It has already reincarnated in another world-line."

Sakyamuni nodded his head.

[More correctly, we should say his 'souls'.]

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In front of everyone, Han Su-Yeong passed on the things she'd been told.

“……Kim Dok-Ja's soul has been scattered throughout the whole universe."

The memories from the moments when she faced off against [The 4th Wall] inside the darkened room – she didn't leave a single word out and repeated every part of that conversation to her companions. Someone fell down, some despaired.

Yi Ji-Hye cried out. "Let's go find that guy again. [The 4th Wall] might know a way, right?! We might be able to recover Dok-Ja ahjussi's soul somehow!"

"If you do that, then what about Kim Dok-Jas reincarnating in other worlds? They must be living their own lives, won't they?"

"T-that is……” Yi Ji-Hye panting like a bull gulped down a glass of water on the table, before carrying on. "There must be some other

way. Whatever that thing was, [The 4th Wall] or whatever, you said it knows something."

"……We don't have any methods to meet that guy again. We used up all of our fragments when opening the wall."

Another four days flew by in an instant. The companions had become utterly devastated, ravaged – some missed their meals, while some didn't even bother to sleep. How long passed by like that? Jeong Hui-Won sought out Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"Jung-Hyeok-ssi."

Yu Jung-Hyeok polishing his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] out of an old habit raised his head. He frowned slightly as if the sunlight stung, before shifting his gaze back to the sword. No matter how much he polished it, the dark stain on the blade didn't want to come off. The stain came from Kim Dok-Ja's letters that he cut down. He quietly stared at the stain, before finally opening his mouth.

"Four days is quite fast for making up your mind."

"That's because we don't have any other choice."

Yu Jung-Hyeok's emotionless eyes locked on to Jeong Hui-Won. Despite experiencing so many tragedies until now, her eyes still burned vigorously. He too used to have such eyes, once upon a time.

"We can do this. We've already done it twice. That's why-!" Jeong Hui-Won shouted.

Yu Jung-Hyeok used to think that.

Their plan was like a well-constructed fantasy.

They believed that they can pull it off this time, that they should be able to see the conclusion they wanted.

「Even if this world ends in tragedy… Don't think that you've all failed.」

Did that fool feel this way back then?

Yu Jung-Hyeok spoke up. "Right. We did do it."

"Please, let's try it one more time! We can definitely pull it off this time! We can definitely save Dok-Ja-ssi……!"

"Do not think that things will turn out better than this turn just because you went back in time."

After spitting out those words reflexively, Yu Jung-Hyeok stopped breathing for a little while.

"……Why are you saying such things? This turn was a definite improvement, wasn't it?

We can definitely do better!"

"It's impossible."

"Why not? When we haven't even tried it……!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't reply. Her expression grew deeply incensed. Her hand then gripped the sword, implying that she'd not hesitate to cut him down if he didn't cooperate immediately. Even then, even under her intense threat, he didn't budge an inch. Seeing him act like this, something else slowly floated up on her expression.

"You… Can it be……?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok still didn't reply. Jeong Hui-Won began urging him in sheer disbelief.

"Is it true? Is it……??"

He finally replied while staring at his own attribute window floating before his eyes.

"I'm no longer the regressor."

The category of [Regressor] no longer existed among his attributes. His Stigmata had vanished, too – both [Regression] and [Group Regression]. He didn't possess any Stigma to turn back the clock.

Winds began blowing in from somewhere. While letting the winds hit him, Yu Jung-Hyeok looked up at the clear skies of .

He couldn't sense the gaze he used to feel all the time. No matter how much he sharpened his perception, he simply couldn't locate it like before.

「He was no longer the protagonist of the story.」

His story came to an end when the lone reader went away.

Along with his final regression, too.

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"We can cross over to another world-line."

And then, someone said something like that.

"It doesn't really have to be a regression, does it? We cross the world-line, and enter the location of a different scenario. We then gather the fragments of 'Final Wall' one more time and meet [The 4th Wall]."

It was a crazy plan.

What made it even crazier was the fact that the person suggesting it was none other than the usually-composed Yu Sang-Ah.

Han Su-Yeong replied. "That guy might not even help us."

"Even still, we need to try. It's better than not trying, right?"

They had already done it once before. No reason not to try it again.

But why was this? Han Su-Yeong didn't believe that this was the right way to go.

What would happen to them if they fail this time, too?

Wouldn't they try to skip over the world-line again?

And just like that, they would cross the world-lines again, again, and again. By continuing that, they might end up no different from the 999th turn's 'Outer Gods'. Their lives might get damaged beyond repair.

The truly wretched thing was, despite knowing the truth she couldn't fight against the temptation.

"How will you cross the world-line, anyway? We can't regress anymore, remember?

And we don't even have the 'Secretive Plotter' to help us in this place, either."

"Have you forgotten? This world-line is different from the 1864th turn."

It was at that moment something, a certain thought, brushed past Han Su-Yeong's mind.

「There was one more method.」

Accompanied by the thunderous "Ku-gugugu!" noise, a gigantic shadow was cast upon Gwanghwamun right then. It came from a massive flying object large enough to completely blanket the main street and then some.

[Fufufu. Long time no see, everyone.]

Bihyung was riding on that flying object.

He had become the Dokkaebi King of this world after the Bureau was completely ruined. And it seemed that this ruined world was exactly to his liking.

[Right, so you need this thing, is that it?]

That was the item only found in the 'last scenario'.

「The Final Ark.」

Han Su-Yeong slowly approached the ark.

Without a doubt, using this would allow them to jump the world-line. Well, Dokkaebis and Constellations of the very last scenario were also planning to escape to another world-line using this vessel, after all.

Yu Sang-Ah spoke up. "However, if we use this… We'll end up being no different to Dokkaebis."

"You should've raised such points before we used the group regression, you know."

Han Su-Yeong reached the ark. That prompted Bihyung to issue a warning.

[Let me make this crystal clear. This ark is a lot older than it looks, so it can be used only once.]

"Doesn't matter."

Being able to travel to another world-line implied that they could use this ark in a similar capacity as Yu Jung-Hyeok's own 'regression'.

What if, they could move to another world-line's specific point in

history? If they could do something like that, then they might be able to change world-lines in a far more efficient, effective manner than Yu Jung-Hyeok's regression.

Han Su-Yeong hurriedly shouted out. "Bihyung. The world-line we want to go to is……!"

However, even before she could finish, a message came to her first.

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

Bihyung's expression became confused. [Mm? What's gotten into it? I don't think it has ever said something like this before?]

"What's wrong? Is it broken?"

[Call out a different world-line.]

Han Su-Yeong spoke up again. That resulted in yet another message.

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

She repeatedly mentioned other world-lines. She spoke, then spoke again. However, the message floating up remained the same.

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

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[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

Utterly flustered now, Bihyung began muttering out. [Passageways to all those world-

lines have been closed off. It means the possibilities that used to be open between the world-lines have completely shut down.]

"We can't go?!"

[Looks that way. Huh, can something like this even happen?]

All the world-lines related to the 'Ways of Survival', the ones she could remember, were blocked off.

“……Does that mean we can't go anywhere?"

[No, there is one.]

"Really? Which one?"

[But, it's a world-line with all the scenarios already concluded.]

Bihyung displayed the entered route.

Surprisingly enough, the destination was a location they all knew quite intimately.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's 1864th regression turn.

The planetary system number 8612, where all the scenarios had already ended.

It was Earth. The one they left from.

Fin.

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The ending to the 1865th regression turn was more perfect than any other worldlines.

A month flew by after the conclusion of the 'Final Scenario'. The damages suffered from the scenarios were quickly repaired, and through the help of the regressors, various nations regained their law and order quite quickly.

Schools opened their doors again, and workers started going back to their old jobs.

The streets were filled to the brim with slogans welcoming the brand new world.

Yi Ji-Hye standing on this alien-feeling street stared at an athletics field across the fence.

"That's your friend, isn't she?"

Jeong Hui-Won asked, and Yi Ji-Hye nodded her head.

The latter's friend was currently running on the track. Her name was Na Bo-Ri. A friend that she had to kill with her own hands, and that very person was alive and well in this world-line. She was alive, she was breathing, and her legs were moving.

"Ji-Hye-yah. You don't have to go back."

Yi Ji-Hye's eyes continued to chase after Bo-Ri's back. The friend she missed so much.

The friend that appeared in the nightmares she always suffered from.

She thought that rescuing Bo-Ri would bring her nightmares to an end.

Unfortunately, memories couldn't be so easily exorcised like that. No,

her nightmare returned with vengeance in a far more vivid form. Within it, she'd live the same scenario many, many times over and murder the dream version of Bo-Ri. Every time that happened, she'd come to realise something – over and over again.

The one she rescued this time wasn't the dead Bo-Ri.

That the one she saved was simply another Bo-Ri from another world-line, that was all.

"Ji-Hye-yah."

Yi Ji-Hye stared at the athletics field for a long time before making her reply. "We made a promise with Biyu, after all."

"…"

"We did promise that we will definitely cross the world-lines again and return home."

Jeong Hui-Won quietly studied Yi Ji-Hye's face while the girl said that, then placed her hand on the latter's shoulder.

"I'm sure it will get lonely once we return. Things that exist here don't on the other side, after all."

Yi Ji-Hye smiled. She used the hand that wiped away at her eyes and pointed to her head. "I won't be lonely. Because they are all in here."

Her voice trembled as she said that.

Was it fine to say something like that?

If she could really say something like that, then why did they even bother to come to this place, to begin with?

"Let's go. This eonni will treat you to something tasty today."

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"Orabeoni."

Whenever Yu Mi-Ah used that term, there would be something she wanted to ask him for.

Yu Jung-Hyeok knew that after going through many regressions. She quietly stared her

older brother, before opening her mouth.

"Orabeoni, you did your very best. No one can do more or better than what you have already done."

His eyelids were solemnly lowered. Yu Mi-Ah climbed up on a chair and placed her hand on the crown of his head.

"Let's stop and go back home."

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- The scenario of tragedy they had to live through.

- The world was enveloped in the acrid smoke of the apocalypse's cannons, and they had lost their precious ones…

The lyrics of a song coming from somewhere caused Han Su-Yeong to frown quite heavily.

"Is this a funeral dirge or something?"

[No, it's actually a trending song these days. A story that exalts you and your group.]

The cackling Bihyung opened the door to the ark.

The vessel, with its Fable energy fully recharged, greeted them.

One by one, regressors who chose to return home climbed aboard the vessel. Not everyone chose to do so, however – some decided to remain.

Such as, Gong Pil-Du unable to say anything while sweating profusely. Behind him, young children could be seen. Han Su-Yeong knew why he regressed in the first place.

"You should remain here. Someone needs to stay and protect this place, after all," said Han Su-Yeong.

Gong Pil-Du didn't reply to her.

"Anyone else wanting to stay behind?" Han Su-Yeong calmly raised her voice. "You should

give it some serious thought, okay? If you leave, then your parents, lovers, friends, etc…… You will never get to see them ever again. Will you be fine with that? So, think it over……"

Shin Yu-Seung then grabbed Han Su-Yeong's hand tightly. "This isn't our world-line, you know? Dok-Ja ahjussi will probably think that way, too."

The majority of 's Incarnations and Constellations chose to return. In the middle of them all was young Kim Dok-Ja lying on the stretcher, unmoving.

[Oh, my dear Persephone, are you really planning to leave me?]

Han Su-Yeong could only smile wryly after witnessing Hades, unable to mop around any longer, started his desperate song-and-dance to appeal to his dearly beloved. Was Hades's personality originally like that?

Persephone directed her troubled smile at such Hades. [I'm truly sorry, Hades. But, I'm not the 'Persephone' you used to know.]

[You're undoubtedly Persephone. The queen of the darkest spring and the Underworld.]

Persephone softly shook her head.

[If you insist on doing this, I shall go with you.]

[This is your world-line, dear. And you're also the king of the Underworld, too. Please, don't forget your dignity.]

[But my world is you, Persephone!]

Bihyung shook his head helplessly. And then, asked Han Su-Yeong. [I'm sure there's no point in me asking, but… Hey, are you really leaving? If you stay, you know you will be treated like a king for the rest of your life.]

"I didn't come to this world-line for that purpose."

Han Su-Yeong looked at the young Kim Dok-Ja lying on the stretcher.

For the last few months, Han Su-Yeong and her colleagues immersed themselves in

scouring the entirety of to find a way to revive Kim Dok-Ja. However, they couldn't locate anything like that. The best they could do was to keep his life going like this, not dead but not alive, either.

"Bihyung. As a goodbye present, why don't you share a bit of the Bureau's Fable with us?"

[…The Bureau's Fable?]

"The system in our world-line is destroyed, you see. We don't know what might happen, so give us a little bit, okay?"

Bihyung pouted with a very unhappy face, but eventually, handed

down a portion of the Fable to Han Su-Yeong.

It was then, a man dashed towards them from afar while kicking up a storm of dust clouds. A big man with unkempt bushy beard on his face, as a matter of fact. It was Yi Hyeon-Seong.

"Hurry and start the engines!!" He shouted out.

When they took a closer look, military vehicles could be seen angrily chasing after him.

“……Now that I think about it, he's still a wanted man, isn't he?"

Han Su-Yeong wryly chuckled and gave her signal.

That prompted Yu Jung-Hyeok to open his mouth. "We're departing."

At last, the 「Final Ark」 was taking to the skies.

- The heroes of are now setting off on their journey!

People were looking up at them. Helicopters from TV stations gathered around and broadcast their departure. Reporters shouted as the cameras zoomed in closer to the companions' faces.

- Why are you all crying? You have managed to save this world-line!

The view of the ground progressively grew further away. Someone among them

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muttered out.

"What did we come here for, I wonder."

Like an episode of a horrible nightmare, the world below was growing distant. It was becoming memories, a past that couldn't be turned back.

Han Su-Yeong muttered out. "What do you mean, why……”

As the ark accelerated, the surrounding view changed. The galaxies of the world-lines streamed past them quickly. And Kim Dok-Ja, having reincarnated, must've been living his life in a distant world-line somewhere.

When Han Su-Yeong thought like that, she felt this really powerful urge. What if she tried to forcibly change the route, even if it was now? What would happen if they embarked on a journey to meet Kim Dok-Ja's reincarnated form somewhere within those distant stars? If she did, if they could do it, then…

「However, was that what Kim Dok-Ja really wanted?」

The ark's window reflected the faces of Yu Jung-Hyeok and Yu Sang-Ah walking up next to her almost at the same time. They too carried the exact same expression as hers, staring at the exact same view as her. The moment she saw their faces, she realised something. She realised that they were thinking the same thing as her. And that was why that plan could never come to reality.

It was then, the ark started thumping and clonking next.

[The vessel has entered a new world-line!]

"Already? Isn't this way too…?!"

As if it was entering the atmosphere, the ark began to suddenly nosedive.

It felt as if gravity itself had disappeared for a second there, but then, the vessel's hull slammed into something with a loud explosive noise. The light within the interior went out from a moment before coming back on.

[The vessel has reached the destination.]

Han Su-Yeong held her pulsing head and scanned her companions.

"Dammit, never mind being old, it's a bloody antique, this thing. Is everyone alright?"

"I'm fine! What about the others…?"

Thankfully, no one was hurt. Han Su-Yeong manipulated the hull and opened up an exit. The door slowly opened, and a flight of stairs extended below it.

She cautiously walked down the steps and the moment her feet touched the ground, someone's voice resounded out.

"Who are you people?!"

What was going on here? Fully-armed soldiers were pointing their guns at her and the group. Yi Hyeon-Seong jumping up in fright hurriedly hid behind her.

"Su-Yeong-ssi! What's going on here?! Even here, they can't be trying to arrest me……?!"

"Of course, that's not possible. This is our home, after all," said Han Su-Yeong. She shoved Yi Hyeon-Seong back, and then addressed the soldiers. "Hey, don't you think your welcoming party to celebrate our return is a bit too rough? Don't you know who I am?"

The guns hurriedly took aim at her as she strode forward like a neighbourhood thug.

"I'm warning you. You pull the trigger on that thing, then all of you will…"

It was then, Han Su-Yeong's eyes caught the face of a certain someone. It was a middle-aged woman's face, setting off this vague deja vu as if she could just about recognise it. The blonde locks were tumbling down to the woman's shoulders, and her crimson eye was swirling in a red vortex. The owner of that eye addressed her.

"……Han Su-Yeong??"

Han Su-Yeong dazedly stared at the blonde woman. That voice… Some time had passed by, but she could never forget it. The middle-aged woman issued the order to stand down with the flick of her hand.

"Han Su-Yeong… Is it really you?"

When she heard that voice again, Han Su-Yeong felt something welling up inside her.

While slowly descending to the ground, she kept staring back at Anna Croft. She didn't know where to start asking her questions, so she asked whatever jumped out of her mouth first.

"How many years has it been since we left?"

“…It's been 20 years."

Han Su-Yeong's trembling lips swallowed those years down. She felt dizzy. Who would've believed now that the horrifying scenarios had ever taken place in this world?

The city of Seoul was no longer the place she remembered. No, this city was as complete as the one from the 1865th turn, the one she thought was pretty much perfect. The deep greenery of the trees lining the streets, and children dribbling balls around in the distant playground far away.

Twenty years.

So, that's what it was. In a world where we don't exist, you have managed to carry on.

And that's how you got to change the world to this extent.

"Han Su-Yeong?"

The startled Anna Croft quickly offered support as Han Su-Yeong wobbled unsteadily.

This was an embrace from a person she didn't even like, yet Han Su-Yeong clung onto those shoulders and broke down in tears.

At last, they had returned to the 1864th turn.

The world where they completed the scenarios for the first time.

Some managed to return, while some, couldn't.

Some things had to remain as the past that nothing could change.

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She saw the sight of the [Industrial Complex] spreading out in the far distance.

Kim Dok-Ja's fading bronze statue stood before it. Next to his figure assuming a slightly awkward pose was a massive statue of a squid.

「To commemorate Kim Dok-Ja's return」

While looking at that bizarre monstrosity of a squid, Han Su-Yeong alternated between breathless sobbing and hysterical laughter. She didn't want to admit it. If she insisted on it, then she felt that something somewhere might change, somehow. But right now, right in this moment, she simply had to admit to it.

Their plan was a failure.

And this place, it was the conclusion to the world they had found.

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Two years went by since the companions' return.

Two years were a longer stretch of time than one might imagine, and perhaps fittingly, several incidents happened during then.

Such as, Yi Hyeon-Seong and Jeong Hui-Won leaving the Complex. Or, Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong entering high school. Yi Ji-Hye getting slapped with an 'F' during the first midterms. Etc, etc……

When all these many, many incidents were to be summarised, it'd be

like the following:

had been disbanded.

Fin.

As if fulfilling a promise, the companions went on their separate ways to find their purpose.

Some set up a security agency, while someone joined the government.

Han Su-Yeong didn't join anyone. Instead, she became someone who taught things.

「「Reading modern philosophy through webnovels」」

Han Su-Yeong did her lectures featuring such a title from the centre.

After the last scenario ended, reality and fantasy were separated once more.

"And so, if you apply Roland Barthes' 'Mourning Diary' to this novel……”

Most of the attendees carried the look of puzzlement asking what kind of a "dipping croissant in a 'ssamjang' sauce" rubbish this was, but a few students seemed to be rather interested by the idea.

One of them raised up his hand and asked her. "Your viewpoint is quite intriguing, Professor. But I do have some objections."

Han Su-Yeong nodded her head as consent to go ahead. The student continued on with a triumphant look. "Did the author really intend for such a reaction? Is applying such a grandiose theory to a novel full of poor grammar and contradictory sentences a correct way to read it? To be honest, I don't think that's what the author was aiming for. Just from looking at the overabundance of onomatopoeia and mimetic words, it……"

Han Su-Yeong glanced at the novel she brought along as her teaching material. For sure, it was a work filled with far too many mistakes. The student was carrying a satisfied smile as if he had finally landed a solid body blow to her.

She pondered for a little while. She could've just explained to that student, step by step. However, she chose not to do so. She instead began saying these following words.

"You're right. Only the author will know the truth."

"But, if you say that, isn't that too irrespon……"

"What would it be like if someone starts judging you?"

"Pardon?"

"That someone might notice your not-very-well washed face, which might be a result of you rushing to get to the lectures on time. Or maybe, they notice your toenails sticking out of your slippers first. And then, they will start thinking like this. Ah, that guy, the way he looks, he must be pretty lazy. And there's no way a lazy person can be

smart. So, no need to listen to the opinions of someone like that."

"W-what are you even……"

"Or maybe, that student must've studied the contents of today's lecture throughout last night. You can tell by looking at how enthusiastically he's questioning the professor like that. Sure, his outer appearance is a bit shabby, but he might not care about such things, to begin with. Yes, they could potentially think that way."

Han Su-Yeong looked into the student's trembling eyes and continued on.

"Just like what you said earlier, the author of the novel probably didn't think about stuff like this. However, it is up to you to decide on what you'll get out of reading the novel. If you only find trash within, then it'll simply end as trash. But if it can impart just a tiny little bit of deeper meaning to you, then that alone will improve this work in your eyes. Again, it is up to you to decide which one it will be. But I'd really like you to choose the option where you get to 'appreciate' your time a little bit better. If you don't, enduring my lectures will become a pretty arduous slog for you."

The student closed his mouth shut and looked back at Han Su-Yeong. It was unknown whether he understood her or not – however, she thought that there was no helping it even if he couldn't.

The student's eyes slowly moved this way and that, then he suddenly said something unexpected. "…… By the way, Professor? Are you going to write a new novel?"

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"Mm?"

"You said this before, didn't you? You're an author because you write. If you don't write, then you're not an author."

There was a subtle undertone of "I don't have to listen to someone like

you who's no longer an author" in his words. Han Su-Yeong didn't reply for a second or two – her unclear, murky eyes seemed to be peering into the distant space.

She then disinterestedly muttered out. "Right. I'm not an author anymore."

"Excuse me?"

"I don't have a reader who'll read my work, you see."

Before she could finish the rest of her words, though, the clock's bell went off first.

Han Su-Yeong grinned and shrugged her shoulders. "Alright, then. The novel you need to read for the next class is……"

She stayed behind on the podium and bade farewell to the students leaving the lecture hall. Her eyes caught a certain text file visible on the screen of the notebook PC

currently flipped open. It was a novel she began writing not too long ago as a sort of test. She accessed the file and quietly stared at the sentences she had written so far.

「It was then she sensed a presence from behind her.」

"That was an interesting lecture. It'd been nice if that person also attended it, though."

Han Su-Yeong quickly turned the screen off and looked back only to discover a familiar face. The 'intruder' was using her elegantly slender fingers to carefully sift through the lecture material scattered around the lecture desk.

"Ah, this lecture sounds like fun, too. Reading modern fantasy literature starting with Pierre Bourdieu, dissection of romance fantasies with Butler……"

"Did you come here to look down on a webnovel author?"

Yu Sang-Ah, slightly tilting her head, smiled brightly. Her smile didn't seem to have changed a bit in the last two years. She deeply peered at Han Su-Yeong, before asking a question. "Why are you wearing glasses all of a sudden? Did your eyesight get

worse?"

"None of your business."

"Aha, I think I understand. You looked too young and your students were ignoring you, right?"

Han Su-Yeong scowled and angrily yanked the black-rimmed glasses off. Yu Sang-Ah teasingly followed that up.

"Shall we go? Let me buy you a drink."

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Two of them walked on the street, one sipping on the iced Americano, while the other, sucking on the peach smoothie. They maintained this awkward distance and focused only on walking forward.

Han Su-Yeong asked in passing. "How's your work with the government? Is it fun?"

"I'm not doing it for fun, you know."

"Who promised to come today?"

"Hyeon-Seong-ssi is currently in the States so it might be difficult for him, but it looks like Hui-Won-ssi will make it. And as you know, Seol-Hwa-ssi is……"

"What about the kids?"

"They are coming. They never missed it before, after all."

Not too long afterwards, the familiar street of Gwanghwamun greeted them. They entered a side street, walked for a bit longer, and eventually, found the diner they were looking for. Its name was < >. Han Su-Yeong unhesitantly pushed the door open.

"Welcome to… Wow, look who it is!"

The one welcoming them with fluent Korean was Selena Kim. Mark expertly spinning pizza dough in the kitchen whistled loudly. She spoke while guiding them inside.

"Please wait for a little bit. Your order will arrive very soon."

"What about the others who arrived before us?"

Selena Kim pointed to the corner of the bar as if to say, see for yourself.

Three familiar backs of the heads were gathered there. Han Su-Yeong did her best to hold back this certain impatient streak and cautiously sneaked behind the trio. And when she was right behind them, swiftly wielded her hands and pounded on the three heads in a row.

"Ouuuch?! Which dumb asshole…?!"

"Hey, our dear shorties, you've all grown a lot, haven't you?"

"Ah, Su-Yeong eonni! Sang-Ah eonni!"

Since this was their first reunion in almost a year, they shared short impressions on how each other looked. And it really didn't take long before their food arrived, too.

"What did you order, exactly? What's the name of this dish?"

"The Desolate Cabin's Demonic Intestines Stir-fry."

Mark bringing out the dish grinned. Han Su-Yeong formed a suspicious expression, before stabbing at the dish shaped like the Korean squid sausage with a fork.

"What the hell? It tastes great."

As expected of its name, the dish was amazing. Her other companions

loosened up and began enjoying the food. How long had it been since they got to sit around and enjoy their meal in leisure like this? Even though two years had passed since they crossed the world-line and returned home, everything still felt like a lie to Han Su-Yeong.

- Oh, ohhh. Wuh-woo wuh-woo, wuh……!

A TV panel installed above the bar was broadcasting scenes from a live concert. A pretty popular idol group was currently performing there. One of them was a monkey, the other was a dragon, and the last one was an Archangel. The Great Sage wielding

the mic delivered an impassioned vibrato-filled roar, which was promptly followed up by the shower of colourful spotlights focusing on the rear of the stage as Uriel made her entrance.

Yu Sang-Ah elegantly chewing on the intestines muttered out. "They are really popular these days."

"I joined their fan club yesterday. The Uriel Force is seriously…!"

When Yi Ji-Hye piped up, Yi Gil-Yeong sent in a quick tackle.

"I can't bear to look at their performance anymore after seeing the one Dionysus has put on, you know? Especially the dude over there……”

"You mean, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon? What's wrong? Isn't he cute?"

Shin Yu-Seung asked, and Yi Gil-Yeong narrowed his eyes before replying while chewing on his fork.

"That's cute to you??"

The panel was now playing the Constellations' new track. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon sporting an eye patch performed a breakdance routine before exploding into a fiery rapid-fire rap monologue.

- This is the oldest Fable! Myth sung by the scenario! One man's evolution, fading with time!

“……What the hell is he even singing about?"

While the Black Flame Dragon's rapid rap bars continued to land, a couple more people opened the diner's door and entered inside. Their faces seemed a bit flushed as if they had already knocked back a few cold ones somewhere else. They were Jang Ha-Yeong and Jeong Hui-Won.

"What's this? Everyone was here already?"

Jang Ha-Yeong quickly rushed in and caught Han Su-Yeong in a headlock.

"How have you been?"

Jeong Hui-Won lightly high-fived Yu Sang-Ah's offered hand before shifting her gaze over to the panel to say something. "Argh, that rapping is really getting on my nerves."

"It's good to see everyone after such a long time."

"Is this everyone for today?"

"Looks that way."

Jeong Hui-Won began boasting about the new house she recently moved into. Her story generally involved how inconvenient the new place could sometimes be as it was not within the area of train stations, and also how easy it was to get some exercise since a park was nearby, etc.

She no longer lived in Gwanghwamun. She didn't even live anywhere near the third subway line, too.

Han Su-Yeong asked her. "Okay, so. You two still together?"

Those words caused the companions' attention to gather here. Jeong Hui-Won smiled bitterly and shook around her alcohol cup. "No, not anymore."

"How come?"

"If we're together, we get reminded of things."

“……What things?"

Yi Ji-Hye and her sparkling eyes were urging Jeong Hui-Won on. However, the latter didn't seem to be in much of a mirthful mood. She simply shook around her drink in silence. Yi Ji-Hye eventually closed her wide-open mouth.

The panel began playing the prelude to the next song.

- The Nameless Salvation (feat. Bald General of Justice) – JUS

Han Su-Yeong listened to the song coming from the panel and murmured something as a follow-up a little bit later. "I see. I guess you're right."

With that, they stopped chatting altogether. The silence wrapped around their ankles

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like a quagmire.

This was the reason why they didn't meet often.

- This was the story no one remembered. However, this story definitely did exist.

Was two years enough time for that 'time period' to become a story?

Han Su-Yeong wanted to know.

"Still no news about Biyu?"

"I asked Miss Anna, but she says there hasn't been any communication so far."

Before the companions made their way back, Biyu went to the [Dark Stratum] to train.

Because of that, they hadn't heard any news regarding her whereabouts for the past two years.

"What about Gong Pil-Du?"

"Probably drinking alone in Chungmuro. Again. I think the shock of separating from his family was too great."

"That guy, I definitely told him to stay behind in the 1865th turn, so why did he stubbornly come back with us……”

"How about Myeong-Oh ahjussi? He's living in the Complex, so you must be clued up on his news, right? Han Su-Yeong?"

"That guy? He's the same as always."

"What about the sooty bastard, though? I heard that he tried to get back to the pro gaming scene before quitting recently."

No one replied.

Jang Ha-Yeong abruptly raised her cocktail glass. "Eiii, I don't know anymore. Let's just get drunk!"

"But, you look pretty drunk already?"

"Don't stooop me! I'm gonna go all out today!"

"Me too. Please give me a shot, too."

"Yu-Seung-ah, you're still underage."

"If you count my age from before the regression, I'm definitely an adult now, you know?"

While the pouting Shin Yu-Seung started pestering the adults, Yi Ji-Hye poured herself a stiff shot of soju and without any side snacks, emptied it in one go.

"Su-Yeong eonni, can you write my report for me? Please?" She then asked desperately.

"If you ask me that again, Imma kill you."

Two years. Around 730 days, if divided daily.

Their current conversations could only take place because they had been desperately living their lives during these past 730 days. They

went to school, they went to work, they moved house; to get away from that day, one step at a time, the companions tried to live their lives to the fullest.

However, someone actually got closer to that day, in order to get away from it.

「Kim Dok-Ja survived through a story called 'Ways of Survival'. In that case, which story allowed us to survive?」

Jeong Hui-Won watched Han Su-Yeong jotting down something on her memo pad, before asking the latter. "What are you busy jotting down there?"

"Just a force of old habit."

"Are you still writing these days?"

Her fingers writing down on the memo came to a stop. Yu Sang-Ah replied in her stead.

"I thought you were? Judging from what I saw earlier."

"Really? What are you writing? Is it a novel?"

Yi Ji-Hye chewing on a mouthful of newly-brought out snacks quickly asked.

"……Nah, I'm just writing to get back in the groove."

"Really? Are you planning to publish a new novel?"

Just as Han Su-Yeong began pondering how she should reply, she heard a rustling noise coming from her side.

"Maybe it's in here?"

Yi Gil-Yeong had left the meal saying he needed to use the john, but

even before anyone had noticed it, he was already back and holding Han Su-Yeong's notebook PC while giggling away. He had prior form of playing computer games on her device without permission, so he naturally knew the password and could log in without any issues.

Shin Yu-Seung shot him an angry glare, telling him to stop this rude act right now.

"Yi Gil-Yeong."

"Argh, what now?"

His cheeks were flushed red as if he had been sneaking in a couple of sips of the booze.

Shin Yu-Seung grew nervous and cautiously studied Han Su-Yeong's moods, but what was going on here? Now normally, the latter would have blown her top by now and smacked the back of Yi Gil-Yeong's head. But now, she was wordlessly sipping on her cocktail. As if, she didn't care if he read it or not.

Yi Gil-Yeong took that as a sign of consent so he quickly opened the file. A short while later, Han Su-Yeong put her glass down and asked him.

"Hey, kid."

"…”

"You sure you have the guts to read it?"

Yi Gil-Yeong's complexion grew paler and paler. Even then, he didn't tear his eyes away from the screen. He continued to read, as if he'd get sucked into the screen at any moment now. Despite furrowing his brows in obvious torment, he continued to read and read. And a few minutes later, he raised his head, tears just about ready to flood

out from his eyes.

“……How many chapters have you written so far, noona?"

"Not that many. It's about, say, less than two books' worth."

"Can I…… read a bit more?"

"Sure."

Realising that Yi Gil-Yeong's status was somewhat strange, the companions stood up from their chairs.

"What's going on? What is its content about to make you react like this?"

"I'm also kind of curious, since it's Su-Yeong-ssi's latest work……”

"I'll pass. I'm gonna wait until it comes out as a book."

With the exception of Yi Ji-Hye saying that while pouring herself another drink, everyone else gathered behind Yi Gil-Yeong.

Han Su-Yeong quietly stared at them.

One by one, their gazes were being sucked into the notebook's screen.

It shouldn't simply be because the story was too entertaining. No, it was that kind of a story, to begin with. Because, this story was…

"Han Su-Yeong, you……”

While listening to Jeong Hui-Won's trembling voice, Han Su-Yeong recalled the sentences she had already recorded.

「"Nothing can be changed through regression. It took me a very long time to realise that."」

That's right. Not a single thing could be changed through the act of regressing. Just like how it was with them back on that day.

"But, why, such a story……"

Even if that was true, however – that didn't mean their regression didn't leave anything behind, either.

「Kim Dok-Ja survived through a story called 'Ways of Survival'. In that case, which story allowed us to survive?」

Actually, Han Su-Yeong already knew the answer to that question.

"It's a story I wanted to show to that idiot."

A story still remained for them.

A story of a person they all loved.

Fin.

"……I just wrote something, hoping to leave it as records of our past. Kim Dok-Ja might wake up someday, you know. When that happens, he'd most likely have forgotten everything about us, anyway."

The companions read Han Su-Yeong's novel.

Shin Yu-Seung, her eyes reddened from tears, angrily rebuked Yi Gil-Yeong, telling him to slow down with the scrolling, while the boy sniffling away continued to click on the mouse. Yu Sang-Ah, Jeong Hui-Won, and Jang Ha-Yeong copied the file and read the novel on their own phones.

Yu Sang-Ah read the scene where she was making an appearance and smiled faintly.

"…… I did say something like that, didn't I?"

Perhaps she was missing those days, because she stroked the sentences on the phone's display. As if doing that might let her really touch Kim Dok-Ja.

Yi Ji-Hye sucking out the last drops from the booze bottle unsteadily got up from her seat. "What the hell. Is it really that fun?"

"Ah?! Noona!"

Yi Ji-Hye going on a drunken rant shoved Yi Gil-Yeong off the chair and took over the notebook PC. She then slapped her cheeks and tried to focus her blurry, half-closed eyes on the screen.

How long went by like that?

"Sob, sooob, waaah! This novel is too sad, you know?!"

“……You've only read the first chapter, so what the……”

Yi Ji-Hye blew her nose noisily and chucked the soiled tissue in Yi Gil-Yeong's direction.

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She remained utterly unperturbed regardless of whether the angry boy was yelling at her or not. Even more so when she scrolled down and read the scene where she made her appearance in Chungmuro – her excitement seemed to reach its peak.

"A girl wielding a lengthy sword stood in the exit as the faint rays of light shone through. While looking at Yi Ji-Hye's hair dancing in the winds intermittently blowing in…… Keuh-euuh, I'm sooo uber-cool, aren't I??"

"Argh, seriously now?! Go back up already!"

Despite Yi Gil-Yeong scolding her, Yi Ji-Hye continued on yap on.

"Like, what happens afterwards? What happens to Kim Dok-Ja……"

In the end, she couldn't win against the booze in her system and before long, her nose kissed the tabletop. Shin Yu-Seung snatched the notebook PC away, and asked a question while taking over the scrolling duty. "…… Do I make an entrance later on, too?"

"Everyone makes their appearance. Although, each person's specific importance will be a bit different," said Han Su-Yeong.

"B-but, I really did my best, you know."

"Yes, I know. Don't worry, your story will show up lots of time later on."

They already knew the ending to this story. What would happen to Kim Dok-Ja, and what experiences the companions would go through as the result. How the dream they dreamed crumbled away. They all knew too well.

Despite knowing, however, Shin Yu-Seung continued to read the story.

They strode forward one sentence at a time towards the predetermined end. The story they couldn't change was right here. Shin Yu-Seung used every ounce of her energy to read it as if each and every sentence disappearing behind was too lamentable, too sad, to her.

"……How wonderful would it have been if Dok-Ja ahjussi was able to read this."

"Should we go to hyung and read it for him?"

Han Su-Yeong thought about the slumbering Kim Dok-Ja inside Yi Seol-Hwa's hospital.

This novel was written for that guy, yet she didn't think he'd be reading it anytime soon.

「Could it be that, just maybe, this was this story's completion?」

The completed ending of those who had lost something – could that be this novel's true purpose? Could these people be the true readers of this story?

"Do you think that ahjussi in the other world-line will like reading, too?"

The companions wouldn't be saved with just this measly little story. But at the very least, they should be able to endure their lives while reading and thinking about it.

Just like how Kim Dok-Ja reading the 'Ways of Survival' did.

"I wonder. Maybe."

"Ahjussi is probably ahjussi in that place, too. Definitely."

"Who knows, he might have ended up as a bug."

"Keep talking like that if you want to die, Yi Gil-Yeong."

"I'd have raised him up if he was reborn as an insect, you know? And read books to him every day, too."

A couple of adults heard the boy's mindless babble and broke out into chuckles.

Yu Sang-Ah spoke up next. "Regardless of where he's born and what's he born as, DokJa-ssi will always be Dok-Ja-ssi."

Han Su-Yeong nodded her head. Kim Dok-Ja should be living a new life in a world out there somewhere. Kim Dok-Ja living his life while reading a story written by someone else and feeling happy or sad, or even moved.

The people of this world would reminisce about such Kim Dok-Ja's tale and live their lives.

Praying that Kim Dok-Ja of that world would not be miserable.

Praying that he'd get to live in as much happiness as his companions were remembering him in this world.

Shin Yu-Seung repeatedly reading the early parts spoke up, her voice sounding like a soft sigh. "I can't read it anymore, because I'm scared it'll end too soon."

"It won't end that soon," replied Han Su-Yeong.

"Are you going to write the next chapter, too?"

"Yeah."

"It would've been so wonderful if we could send this novel to the other world, too. It's a shame that only we get to read it."

…The other world?

Han Su-Yeong became momentarily dazed at that unexpected idea.

She had never even thought about it. It wasn't a possibility to start with, too. She pondered this for a bit longer, but before she could say something, a piece of breaking news came out of the TV screen.

- Breaking news just in. A terrorist has attacked the 'Scenario Museum' located in Gwanghwanmun……

"Terrorists? In this day and age?"

Jang Ha-Yeong shook her head. Most of the system's influence had already disappeared from this world, so possessing Star Relics didn't automatically mean you'd be able to do something with them. It was

right then that Jeong Hui-Won's phone started ringing.

"Hello, this is Jeong Hui-Won, the representative of Iron Caps, the trusted security organisation protecting your…… Excuse me? Where? Who showed up??"

The clearly-flustered Jeong Hui-Won raised her head and looked at the TV panel. The news broadcast's ticker-tape continued to move along.

- Identity of the terrorist is now known to be a Transcender formerly known as the

'Conquering King'…

…The 'Conquering King'?

A short while later, the terrorist's face showed up on the screen.

- The terrorist, Conquering King Yu Jung-Hyeok. (33, unemployed)

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"Stop him!"

The riot police arriving on the scene blocked off the museum's access and stood before the approaching man. However, he used fleet-footed movements to evade their truncheons. The jet-black coat danced in the air as the man's hands went to work, and the riot police rushing in were scattered away like the breaking waves.

"Uwaaahk!"

"He's using the system's powers! Hurry up and call the security company! And get the government-affiliated Constellations, too-!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok's [Red Phoenix Shunpo] spat out reddish-yellow licks

of flames as he dashed forward. Each step taken emitted truly stupendous heatwave and the members of riot police had to back away in fear. Before long, he had reached the front of the [Scenario Museum]'s doorstep.

The place where Star Relics from the age of apocalypse were stored. This was where the important artefacts not open to public had been gathered. The riot police chasing after Yu Jung-Hyeok shouted out.

"He's just a Transcender from the old generation! The battle array formation the Constellation-nims of the North Stars worked together to create near the museum will……"

['North Star Five March Formation' has been triggered!]

Yu Jung-Hyeok analysed the inner workings of the array formation blocking him. It was a Murim-style battle array formation that followed the laws of the North Star and five elements of the universe to create a remarkable unison of the 'life gate' and 'death gate'. His eyes emitted golden rays of light as his [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword]

accurately stabbed into seven separate points.

Kuu-rurururung!

"Crazy son of a… How could he…?!"

These young riot police members who didn't know much about the age of apocalypse could only look on with their jaws hitting the floor. Even they had heard of the stories, of course.

- Twenty years ago, a man who dared to stare arrogantly at the stars of the heavens existed.

It was only a story to them, however. A man who could evenly match up to the Constellations? They believed that no such man could have

ever existed. Too bad for them, the living proof was now standing before their eyes.

Yu Jung-Hyeok stepped within the crumbling array formation. No one could stop him now.

It was also then someone appeared among the rising dust clouds.

- Conquering King, what do you think you're doing? Surely, someone like you don't have a reason to steal items such as the Star Relics?

It was Han Dong-Hoon, an Incarnation affiliated with the government. He was famed for sending messages to the opposition's eyes rather than addressing them directly.

Yu Jung-Hyeok quietly stared at the message, before pointing at the steeple of the museum. A small ship hung up there like some kind of a symbol. "I need that ship."

- That's just a replica. It can't even fly.

"We'll see once I activate it."

- I know that you've been roaming the world without reporting periodically to the world government. Despite knowing that, the world government decided to turn a blind eye. Because, they respect your achievements from the age of apocalypse.

"……"

- However, that ends today. If you insist on behaving like this, then we won't have any

choice but to use force.

Almost at the same time as those words arrived, powerful fighting spirit exploded out from Han Dong-Hoon's entire body.

He, too, was a survivor from the era of scenarios, a powerful figure who came to be known as the 'King of Shadows' by the time scenarios were drawing to a close.

"You wish to stop me?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok took a single step forward. At the same time, humans of the surroundings knelt down simultaneously. Han Dong-Hoon's expression stiffened, and he quickly performed hand signs.

- All personnel, get ready to…!

Even before the message could be finished, shadows hiding on the museum's rooftop began falling like dead cicadas.

Tumble, drop…

The fallen agents writhed around like worms. Traces of their pressure-points being depressed could be seen throughout their bodies. Surprisingly, over thirty Incarnations were dispatched to this place together with Han Dong-Hoon, yet all these elite warriors were taken care of even before anyone had noticed it.

"Get out of my way."

Han Dong-Hoon's shoulders trembled imperceptibly. For the past 20 years after the scenarios ended, the strongest Incarnation he knew of was the prophet Anna Croft, the only surviving Incarnation that could compare to the Constellations. However, even if she came, could she stop this monster?

- Han Dong-Hoon, respond… Han Dong-Hoon?

If he didn't escape from here, he'd get killed. Han Dong-Hoon knew this, yet he couldn't even lift his feet. An incredible amount of killing intent had tightened around him like a noose. Just who would be able to stop this Transcender? The Murim world's Transcenders residing on another planet? Or, Constellations currently on a world tour? No, even they might find it too much.

The monster before his eyes was an existence that had reached the highest realm even among the Transcenders. Post-destruction of , Constellations could no longer exercise the power levels of their past selves. That's why…

"Captain Han Dong-Hoon! Evade it!!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok's sword moving, and Han Dong-Hoon squeezing his eyes shut, as well as an ear-splitting noise exploding, all happened at the same time. Scary waves of magical force shoved Han Dong-Hoon's body away. It had been really long time since he last saw a clash heavy enough to cause the storm of Probability's aftermath.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu……

He held onto the crack on the ground and endured the storm of aftermath, only to be greeted by an unbelievable spectacle.

"F*ck, man. Trying to use my powers in such a long time is killing me."

Someone was blocking the Conquering King's sword.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', is unleashing her power!]

[Fable fragments of the 'Bureau' is supporting the 'Architect of the False Last Act'!]

She was one of only a handful of the truly strong who could stop that monster, Yu Jung-Hyeok.

The purple-hued magical energy oozing out from her entire figure was dyeing the surroundings in a foreboding manner.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok, what kinda stupidity is this?" said the Empress of Black Flames, Han Su-Yeong.

"This isn't a matter you should concern yourself with."

"Why shouldn't I?? Our former Regressor friend suddenly decided to become a terrorist for free, so how can I not?"

"……"

"The comrade of the past has lost his way and became corrupted, so it's the duty of the superhero to take up on the responsibility of rehabi……”

Kwaaa-boooom!

"Goddammit, what gives?? Why are you going mental here, man??"

"Get out of the way. I don't plan to exchange sophistries with you."

"No, you better start talking. That's always been your damn problem. You've been behaving nicely for the past two years, so why the hell……”

Swiiiiiish-!

She pulled out a dagger from her inner pocket, gritted her teeth, and defended against Yu Jung-Hyeok's attack. The overabundant bombardment of the sword energy began forcing her body back bit by bit. Han Su-Yeong glanced in the direction she was being pushed back.

…The Scenario Museum.

No matter how hard she thought about it, it made no sense. Yu Jung-Hyeok had no reason to target that place. He wouldn't get any stronger than he already was by possessing a couple more Star Relics at this point. Besides, a Star Relic someone like him might find desirable wouldn't even be in this pla……

It was then, her eyes caught the sight of a certain something.

"Hey, you. It can't be……”

Her hair strands slowly began floating up. Creeping, ominous waves of energy spread out everywhere. Cold rage was filling up Han Su-Yeong's voice.

“……Is it because of that?"

Yu Jung-Hyeok's eyes were seething, and his irises were reflecting the hull of the replica [Final Ark] located on top of the steeple.

Fin.

Han Su-Yeong yelled out.

"You stupid bastard! Did you forget already?? This world-line's ark has already-!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok's sword thrust dug into her opening. The moment she gasped out, her dagger was already flying away. Blood spluttered from the cut wound.

His sword was now pointing straight at her neck.

"Jung-Hyeok-ssi! Please stop!"

"H-hold on, master! Are you mad!! What's gotten into you!?"

The companions arriving belatedly approached them to stop the fighting.

However, Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't even look behind at them as he swung his sword. The gob-smacking level of magical energy wave shot out from the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] and drew a line of roiling flames one step in front of the companions.

"No one crosses that line. If you do, I will cut y……”

Smack!

Han Su-Yeong's left foot rising up in the blink of an eye accurately kicked his wrist. The

[Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] gripped in his hand flung away, drew circles in the air, before stabbing into the ground.

Han Su-Yeong growled at him. "Yu Jung-Hyeok. I'm sure you already know this, but… I really, really hate to see a rotten apple spoiling the whole barrel."

"……”

"You know, I was feeling pretty good up until a few minutes ago. Specifically, before

you started doing this crap, that is… I guess the peace of the past two years have been too sweet for me, seeing how I've completely forgotten about what kind of a bastard you are."

It was hard to tell just who her boiling rage was directed at.

Han Su-Yeong recalled the faces of her companions reading her novel. The faces that grew at ease as they read the story.

The companions, everyone else, even herself…… they were about to

feel brave enough to finally take that one step forward, away from 'that day'. Yet…

Han Su-Yeong stopped both Jeong Hui-Won and Yu Sang-Ah about to cross the burning line. "You two, stay back. Looks like today is finally the day I pound some sense into this guy."

As soon as those words ended, both the figures of Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok vanished. The place they met again was in the air dozens of metres off the ground. The thunderclap-like explosions rang out and their fists collided against one another.

Ruuuumble, kurururung!!

The blade of Han Su-Yeong's hand slammed hard into Yu Jung-Hyeok's waist, while his right kick landed on her solar plexus. The exchange of attacks and defences that even Constellations' eyesights found hard to keep up continued on. Blood trickled down her lips, while large, bloody bruises formed on his arms raised up to guard him.

Yi Ji-Hye watching the fight unfold couldn't hold back and reached for her own sword.

It was Yu Sang-Ah who stopped her.

"Eonni? But why?"

"Let them be for the time being."

Perhaps she had predicted something, because while stopping the companions, she spread out her lotus pedestals, as well. She was planning to protect the civilians from the storm of aftermaths soon to visit them.

Right next second, the atmosphere up in the sky began to change.

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has started its stammered attempt at storytelling.]

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is waking up from the darkness.]

The clash of these two managed to awaken the old Fables. Han Su-Yeong summoned all of her strength to broke through Yu Jung-Hyeok's fist and shouted out.

"Speak up! Why today, of all days? Why have you been staying quiet for the last two years only to start this crap today?!"

"None of your business."

"Aha, is that so."

She didn't plan on going this far. However, looking at the expressionless face of Yu Jung-Hyeok acting like a damn stubborn mule, she simply couldn't rein in her boiling anger anymore.

"I always hated you. And regretted it, too. Why did I write the story of someone like you with my own hands?"

She'd never have said these words in any other times. Even then, she continued to spit out everything anyway.

"I cursed my other self. If this story didn't exist, none of these things would've happened. No one would've died. And Kim Dok-Ja might have……!"

Yu Jung-Hyeok's fist finding that brief window of opening cut her words short. He kept his mouth resolutely shut and continued to fight. Though she hadn't heard a proper answer yet, Han Su-Yeong knew why he was trying to get a hold of the [Final Ark].

"We already failed. Since we came home with our tails between our legs, you should've quietly accepted it and moved on. Have you really forgotten everything [The 4th Wall]

said to us?"

She knew the truth, and that was why she just couldn't stand it anymore.

「You shouldn't have been greedy. No, y o u sh oul d've be en con te nt wi th 49% Kim Dok Ja」

[The 4th Wall]'s voice from that day, the one she had never forgotten until now.

Yu Jung-Hyeok finally opened his mouth. "Spoken like a true loser. You simply gave up, that's all."

Every time their fists collided, the worn-out Fables scattered in the air. The fragments emitting faint rays of light settled down on his cheeks.

It was only then did she spot his messed-up appearance. The unkempt, stiffened hair, and his rather unsightly-looking unwashed face.

Han Su-Yeong sucked in her breath and took a step back in that instant. Some memories brushed past her head just then – Yu Mi-Ah, showing up one day while crying her eyes out and saying that her oppa had just disappeared, and Yu Jung-Hyeok, walking away from the pro gamer job he barely managed to earn back, and vanishing into thin air.

「Should I have started off with how he had been doing all this time?」

Golden aura was focusing on his right hand. That was the beginning of the [Breaking the Sky Force Punch]. He was being deadly serious here. Han Su-Yeong hurriedly unfurled her right hand.

[Stigma, 'Character Summon', is activating!]

At the bare minimum, if she used this skill to fling him far away, then…

[Applicable individual is no longer a 'Character'.]

She belatedly realised it – the 'Yu Jung-Hyeok' standing before her eyes was not the character from the 'Ways of Survival' she had written.

After Kim Dok-Ja's final act had arrived, and after the 'Ways of

Survival's story came to an end, Yu Jung-Hyeok had completely broken free of the position of the 'Character'.

A punch wrapped in pure golden light scythed the air and flew in. She activated every single evasion skill she could.

The attack brushed past her shoulder with the thinnest margin imaginable. The storm of aftermath from that improbably powerful punch pricked her painfully.

Yu Jung-Hyeok muttered out. "…… Your skills have barely lost any of their original powers. Is this due to the system's grace?"

The only reason why Han Su-Yeong's skills could still exhibit such power was because she received the Bureau's Fable from the 1865th turn's Bihyung.

Yu Jung-Hyeok asked her with an emotionless voice. "This world no longer needs the system. Yet, why did you receive that Fable from him?"

"Obviously to maintain Kim Dok-Ja's life."

They went through with the [Group Regression] because Kim Dok-Ja's Avatar was increasingly getting weaker. And she received the Bureau's Fable just in case something similar happens to Kim Dok-Ja.

"Why did you do something like that? You should know this. That fool cannot wake up again," said Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"Kim Dok-Ja isn't dead y-!"

"If you really believe that, then why are you stopping me?"

For a moment there, she became speechless.

Yu Jung-Hyeok then flashed right behind her, and slammed down on

her back. Han Su-Yeong crash-landed on the ground. She coughed out thick dust and stood back up, then shouted at him while tottering unsteadily.

"……Yu Jung-Hyeok, wake the hell up! You think this is what Kim Dok-Ja really wants?

He told you, didn't he? He told you not to abandon this world. And you also agreed!"

"That's right. I agreed not to regress."

"Don't make me laugh! You can't regress anymore, that's what. If you still could do it, you'd probably have gone back!!"

"I may have."

Yu Jung-Hyeok's golden eye began to glow brightly within the thick dust cloud. And that eye was now questioning Han Su-Yeong.

"Are you any different?"

She couldn't answer back. But in her stead, Kim Dok-Ja's Fables still remaining within her grasp replied.

[Fable, 'One Who Opposes Miracles', is lamenting in sorrow.]

These were words that she just couldn't let go. She wrote them down somewhere sometimes to endure her life. Telling herself not to regress, to live in the present. She continued to reflect on those obvious-sounding words of the past, and continued to endure moment by every moment. That was her past two years.

"It seems that you too couldn't forget anything."

"Shut up."

Han Su-Yeong dashed forward in an instant and punched him squarely in the face.

Every time their fists flew out, the Fables they shared and compiled together writhed violently.

[Fable, 'King of Kaixenix', is being agitated.]

She believed that she worked hard to endure. She believed that a lot of time had passed by now, as much as all the sentences she had written down. She breathed, she ate, and she slumbered – Han Su-Yeong survived in that manner.

「You are not a regressor because you regress.」

However, could she really say she had been living a life that way?

「Some people would live their entire lives inside the already-ended past.」

Every time bones in her fists were crushed, Fables scattered away little by little –

Fables, the raw memories preserved as was without any revisions. Han Su-Yeong reflexively began retrieving these scattering Fables.

She didn't want to let go of any one of them. She didn't want to forget about a single thing.

「For the past two years, she hadn't been able to take a single step forward.」

Han Su-Yeong panted breathlessly and spoke up. "What do you think will change if you do this now?"

"……"

"Even if you leave, you won't find Kim Dok-Ja. And you can't even go anywhere."

"……"

"Besides, this world-line's [Ark] is already destroyed. Did you forget what happened back during the final battle? That isn't an ark. And we can't leave this world-line even if we wanted to!"

The powers of the two people collided once more. Accompanied by the loud "Ku-dududu!!" noise, the storm was generated from their magical energy. Yu Jung-Hyeok standing in the centre of the storm then replied.

"I've compiled so many Fables up until now, but I still do not know what my ■■ is."

The vigorous, ferocious Fable exploded within the air. He didn't pay any heed to the precious Fables being damaged and simply swung his fists.

"You wrote my story. In that case, you should also know where my story is supposed to end."

At that moment, sentences began streaming past Han Su-Yeong's head.

「Did Yu Jung-Hyeok really come here to acquire the [Final Ark]?」

The belated realisation flooded in.

The regressor weary of the scenarios could only carry on because the scenarios existed.

Yu Jung-Hyeok then began gathering all of his remaining Fables. All these Fables belonging to a man who had finally escaped from the curse of regression bared their collective fangs at Han Su-Yeong.

"Hit me with everything you've got, Han Su-Yeong."

「This was Yu Jung-Hyeok's last stand.」

Every cell in her body was ringing alarm bells.

The regressor who had repeated lengthy lifetimes.

A certain emotion floated upon those eyes that had been described dozens, hundreds of times before. Han Su-Yeong knew very well what that emotion was.

Yu Jung-Hyeok wished to die in this place.

Not by the hands of anyone, but by the existence who had written his very first sentence.

"Screw you!! You've never, ever done what I wanted from you, so what the hell!!"

Kwa-aaaaaaah-!!

Yu Jung-Hyeok unleashing all of his might swung his fist again – one attack that focused all of his great Fables. The climax of the fight was about to be reached. Han Su-Yeong too unleashed all of her Fables. And then…

An explosion akin to a star blowing up rocked the world.

Everything hurt as if her entire body had been pounded on. Every bone in her right fist thrust forward was broken. Her companions cried out, while other spectators screamed. Han Su-Yeong endured the force of impact while stuck in this ringing pain harsh enough to tear out her eardrums. Her whole body was now left in tatters.

Yu Jung-Hyeok was collapsed on the ground, unmoving.

Her heart began pounding away.

"Yu Jung-Hyeok?"

The tips of his hand trembled ever so faintly. He slowly opened his eyes and looked up at her. She panted heavily and barely managed to force out some words.

“……This is a little different from back then in the Dark Castle, right?"

The moment she finished saying that, both of her legs gave way. When did she get hit?

All the bones in her knees had been completely crushed.

"Doesn't look that way," muttered Yu Jung-Hyeok.

"You son of a……”

Two of them collapsed face-first into the ground. Han Su-Yeong crawled towards Yu Jung-Hyeok. Her anger didn't seem like it'd abate soon unless she smacked him just one more time, somehow.

Her hand shaking precariously was about to slap him in the back of his head, but unfortunately, his own right hand shaking pitifully grabbed onto her wrist first. And so, the arms of two people started a contest of what little strengths they had left in mid-air, only for them miss each other and sag down weakly. They truly had not one drop of energy left to continue.

The torn scars left behind in the skies by the collision of their Fables could be seen.

And the view of the distant could be spied within the horribly-torn sky.

The few remaining stars of the night sky sparkled and sent their faint rays of light on the two people.

Yu Jung-Hyeok staring at that spectacle for a long while spoke in passing. "…… Kim Dok-Ja is supposed to be scattered to the rest of the universe."

Kim Dok-Ja's soul, scattered away into fine little pieces. How much of him truly remained within those tiny fragments? Even Han Su-Yeong couldn't be sure.

Except that, she was sure of the tiny 'Kim Dok-Jas' being born as some

things in the mouths of the worlds she hadn't even thought of. He might be reborn as a human.

Maybe the place was similar to Earth. Maybe this time, he'd be born in another continent, not in the Korean Peninsula.

"Do you think that that fool has become happier now?"

The moment she heard him, Han Su-Yeong felt that something had finally come to an end.

The mouth of her heart ached really painfully. She could clearly hear the sounds of something breaking – the sounds of a story coming to an end. The sounds of their truly

long mourning finally drawing to a close. That was the sound of someone only living in their past finally letting go of that very past. Right at that moment, Han Su-Yeong was overcome by the bizarre guilt of corruption, of betrayal.

"Kim Dok-Ja, he……”

「Was it possible that he didn't want us to give up?」

Could it be that even if everyone else let go of their long, agonising sorrow, he wished for just one person to continue on with the acts of sheer stupidity at the cost of ruining their life?

She heard Yu Jung-Hyeok coughing away painfully and muttered out what she needed to say. "I'm sure he's doing well. He's a tough guy, after all."

"……”

"He's probably living a life of his own out there, and living it happily, too. Who knows, he might be reading some other weird book in the meantime, too."

"Even if we find him, the fool probably won't remember anything."

This was the end of their mourning.

There was no meaning in crossing the world-line anymore. Even if they did find that

'Kim Dok-Ja', what could they possibly do? They couldn't certainly impose the past on someone who didn't remember. The reincarnated Kim Dok-Ja wasn't the 'Kim Dok-Ja'.

The one they knew no longer existed in this universe, no matter where they looked.

Even then, Han Su-Yeong still blurted out something strange.

"We don't know that. If the 'Ways of Survival' also exists in the place where he's reincarnated into, then…"

Right away, she felt puzzled by why she said something like that.

"As I said, the Ways of Survival……"

Her mouth continued to mutter out, perhaps to reject her own will.

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「Kim Dok-Ja, the 'Most Ancient Dream', has been scattered throughout the universe.」

Her mind began spitting out disorienting sentences one after the other.

「This universe is maintained by the imagination of the 'Most Ancient Dream'.」

「In that case, what is the 'Most Ancient Dream' dreaming about right now?」

Creeping goosebumps crawled up her arms. She didn't even want to think about it, yet…

「"Ahjussi from another world-line probably likes books, too. Right?"」

This was truly a nonsensical delusion.

Even then, despite knowing that, Han Su-Yeong couldn't stop her thought process.

Kim Dok-Ja, reading someone's novel while carrying an expression she couldn't imagine on the other side of the distant universe.

"That guy, he… Is he still curious about the conclusion to this story, I wonder?" Han Su-Yeong asked.

"……What are you talking about?"

"What if… What if the countless 'Kim Dok-Jas' scattered to the rest of universe read a certain story all at the same time……"

「Why did Constellations try to spread their own fables as far and as wide as possible?」

「How come the foundation of this world was 'stories'?」

"What if all those Kim Dok-Jas who had forgotten that he is the 'Most Ancient Dream', dreams of the same story?"

The way to rediscover Kim Dok-Ja, without ruining the lives of the reincarnated Kim Dok-Jas living in other world-lines.

Han Su-Yeong's hazy, indistinct sounding voice continued on.

"What if the story he's dreaming of… is the same as the story we all wish for……?"

Her chain of thought was broken only after a pitch-black shadow was cast over her head.

"This area was earmarked to be renovated as a public park, but thanks to you two, it's complete chaos here."

Since when was it? Anna Croft was standing there.

"Are you planning to cross the world-line again?"

Han Su-Yeong belatedly regained her wits after seeing that woman's face. She then remembered the delusion she'd been cooking up just now and felt ashamed by it.

From the get-go, that idea was nonsense. To make Kim Dok-Jas of other world-lines dream of the novel she had written. What a crazy and empty talk that was.

More importantly, there was no way to cross to other world-lines in this world, anyway.

But then, Anna Croft's expression was somewhat strange. "I thought that a day like this might come sooner or later."

Her eye was emitting the crimson glow. Her gaze was now directed at the steeple of the museum.

At the replica of the [Final Ark].

Han Su-Yeong's heart began beating faster and faster. Such a thing was not possible. It shouldn't be possible, but… How?

Ku-gugugu…

Slowly, so very slowly, the so-called replica began floating up from the top of the museum.

Yu Jung-Hyeok and his brows shot up high was already sitting up as he stared at the

airborne object.

The ark – its size might have been very small, but without a doubt, it was still an ark.

"I collected some parts and had it fixed for the past 20 years, just in case. If none of you had returned, then I was planning to go and visit you. Although not many parts could be salvaged and the vessel has not been repaired completely……"

The ark slowly floating up opened like a capsule and revealed its interior. This was a very small [Final Ark] where only one person could barely fit inside.

"It can be used. Except, only one person can ride it."

Fin.

Han Su-Yeong and Yu Jung-Hyeok were taken away in stretchers to the hospital where Kim Dok-Ja was staying.

While listening to the round of Yi Seol-Hwa's non-stop nagging, Han

Su-Yeong calmly organised the plan of action she came up with. And exactly one hour later, she told the companions of her idea by using the most concise words she could think of, while leaving nothing out in the process.

However, you speaking concisely and precisely didn't automatically mean your audience would concisely and precisely understand you. The companions' reactions were like this:

“……What do you want to do, again??"

Jeong Hui-Won asked back, while both Shin Yu-Seung and Yi Gil-Yeong dropped the jaws ever so slightly.

Han Su-Yeong replied. "Okay, so, if I put it in a simpler perspective……”

"You are aware of what you've been saying until now, right?"

“……Uh? So you did understand me?"

"We can't do that thing again. Did you already forget about the memories from two years ago? What happened to us after the group regression……?"

"I'm not saying we should regress."

"This and that are the same! If we cross the world-lines again……!"

"I'm also not saying we should distort the other world-line's future, either. You did hear what I said, right? I just want to send a single novel to that side, that's all."

Yi Ji-Hye silently listening to the conversation finally opened her mouth. "Okay, what you're saying is, you want to show the novel written on this side to Dok-Ja ahjussi in the other world-line. Did I hear you right?"

"You did."

"What meaning doing that will have?"

Han Su-Yeong started her explanation in a composed voice. "The 'Most Ancient Dream'

is Kim Dok-Ja. And that Kim Dok-Ja was broken down into many pieces and scattered around to the rest of the world-lines before reincarnating into different existences.

You with me so far?"

"……You think I'm a dummy because I got an F last time?? Okay, so what's next?"

"The important part starts from there. The newly-reincarnated Kim Dok-Ja might not be 'Kim Dok-Ja' anymore. However, that doesn't mean he isn't the 'Most Ancient Dream', either. They themselves might not be aware of it, but all those souls are the

'Most Ancient Dream' that maintains this universe."

Back when they escaped from the [Final Wall] for the last time, no one was left behind in the subway. Yet the universe's time didn't stop. Meaning, the 'Most Ancient Dream'

hadn't disappeared.

The souls that used to be Kim Dok-Ja had scattered to the rest of the universe and reincarnated, and unbeknownst to even themselves, they were dreaming of the different universes.

Yu Sang-Ah nodded her head as if she understood it. "So, you meant to use their power of imaginations."

"The imagination of the Most Ancient Dream is reality, after all."

"Making the reincarnated Dok-Ja-ssi dream of the conclusion we all want……"

"That's right. It'll be like we're presenting him with the source of imagination. So that they can dream about this world's conclusion." Han Su-Yeong studied the faces of her companions one at a time and continued on. "No one will get hurt this way. No one born in other world-lines will get harmed. All we have to do is to make those guys read a certain story, that's it."

Countless Kim Dok-Jas scattered throughout many world-lines would all be imagining it. Those born with various appearances, living in various environments.

There was no meaning in meeting them or bringing them here. The only thing the companions could hope for in this situation was a miracle.

A miracle that could bring back Kim Dok-Ja they all remembered.

It was fine even if it was all a delusion, a lie – if only he could imagine their happiness…

If only all those countless 'Kim Dok-Jas' imagined the one single universe…

A short bout of silence descended on the room. A similar sort of expression was floating up on the faces of everyone.

They knew full well such a plan had zero chance of becoming reality. In order to make this plan work, several impossible hurdles had to be cleared first.

The one who spoke up as the representative of the companions was Yi Hyeon-Seong, who returned to the country only about 30 minutes ago.

"Su-Yeong-ssi."

He had returned in a hurry after hearing about Yu Jung-Hyeok and Han Su-Yeong's news. His eyes always burning with righteousness and will to fight were now obscured by heavy shadows.

"We're all too tired. We're too afraid of hoping."

What made a person truly exhausted was not despair. No, it was 'hope' that seemingly was on the cusp of coming true but would never become reality.

Han Su-Yeong also knew that. She slowly squeezed her fist tightly. "I know that. That's why I'm asking all of you for a favour."

Yi Hyeon-Seong's eyes trembled the moment he heard the word 'favour'.

Han Su-Yeong had never, ever used that sort of expression before.

"I'm aware that it has a very low chance of becoming true. That's why this is merely…

a type of ceremony, if you will. Something that must be done, to put the finishing touch on the past and to live the remainder of my life properly."

Jeong Hui-Won asked her. "…… What can we help you with?"

Rather than a verbal reply, Han Su-Yeong placed her notebook PC on the hospital room's desk and accessed a certain text file, one that they were intimately familiar with.

A novel with its title still left as "no subject".

Han Su-Yeong slowly, so very slowly, began typing the title of the novel.

*

From that day on, Han Su-Yeong poured her entire being on writing the novel along with assistance from her companions. Even if it was her, she didn't retain every bit of memories in perfect order, so to complete the story, she had to borrow her companions' own memories.

"So, we'll make Dok-Ja ahjussi read this novel… But, how will we do that?"

"We somehow need to make him come across it naturally, without him feeling any disharmony. To the extent that he doesn't even realise he's currently imagining this world."

"Meaning, we gotta write a seriously entertaining story."

"Dok-Ja hyung read a boring novel till its end, so won't he read it even if we write it like, whatever?"

Han Su-Yeong looked at the glib-sounding Yi Gil-Yeong and shook her head. "We don't know what might happen, so we gotta do our best. Kim Dok-Ja of other world-line might not be as patient as ours, after all."

"Let me help!"

"Me too! Noona, you don't know the lingo the teens use nowadays, right?"

The novel was compiled in Kim Dok-Ja's hospital room most of the time. After ending

her lectures, Han Su-Yeong would come to visit him in his ward. Other companions also took turns to pay him a visit.

"Sorry, I'm late. I had an announcement to make tomorrow, so……" said Yi Ji-Hye.

"It would've been still fine to come after you were finished," replied Han Su-Yeong.

"No can do. Today's the scene of my awakening, right?" Yi Ji-Hye's voice was filled with so much excitement. She scanned the manuscript Han Su-Yeong had written and continued to yap on. "Wow. This place…… Hah, I really almost died back then."

"…"

"Keuh-heuh. Reading this part again still gives me the goosebumps. Eonni, you don't mind me asking you when I'm supposed to show up ag……"

"If you're planning to bother me, just get out."

"Ah? Why are you being so cold? I even found a mistake in the setting, you know."

"A mistake? Where?"

"I never said anything like this!"

Yi Ji-Hye pointed at the screen. Han Su-Yeong glanced at the younger girl's phone, and spoke up. A closer look revealed that the scene in question came from when Yi Ji-Hye was saying her piece during the cinema dungeon.

Han Su-Yeong explained. "Some creative licence is unavoidable, so some parts might be a little different from what happened in reality. But that part……"

「"Why do you think you're alone? We're here together, aren't we! No, hang on a sec…

I'm always by your side, aren't I?! So, don't lose hope! Think about our kid…!」

"……I wrote that according to what Uriel told me, though?"

One day. Two days. Three. Sentences were diligently compiled.

When she couldn't recall the past properly, she'd even start pinching the sleeping Kim Dok-Ja's cheeks. And when her resentment flared up for no reason whatsoever, she'd

even write some weird things in the novel, as well.

「"Find the ugly king!"」

Well, it probably didn't matter, anyway. He'd not even realise that this was his own story, after all.

The companions came to visit the hospital room in alternating turns as if they were entering confessional booths.

"Actually, Dok-Ja-ssi was cursing a little bit during here……"

"Ah, don't write what I just said. Understand?… Hey, I told you to omit the part, so why?"

They all seemed quite surprised by the fact that they still remembered so much of the story, and…

"N-no, wait! Noona! I do respect hyung, but… But, what are you doing, portraying me as some sort of a religious fanatic??"

…And, they seemed to be finding peace with the fact that they still remembered this story, too.

They sometimes cried, or read the memos containing story beats that would soon form the part of the story in the future.

Shin Yu-Seung asked. "By the way, why did you portray regression so negatively like this?"

"Well, even in that world, Kim Dok-Ja should only have one life, that's why. He might get badly influenced by reading this, right? I mean, he could still be a young kid there."

At her reply, a shadow drew upon Shin Yu-Seung's complexion. "But, we regressed, didn't we? In that case, will it be fine to write this part differently from reality?"

"Nah. I'm just going to write it as is."

"Pardon? But why?"

"Doesn't matter who, every human is a regressor, you see."

There was a certain sentence she thought of while fighting against Yu Jung-Hyeok. In all honesty, she didn't expect Shin Yu-Seung to get what she was saying, anyway.

The younger girl stared at the sentences for a little while, before shifting her gaze to the outside of the window. "Our regression couldn't influence this world-line at all.

When I think about it sometimes, it feels like the last night's passing dream. What is the difference between the past that couldn't change the present, and a delusion that can't change anything?"

Han Su-Yeong was somewhat taken aback from that, and her lips bobbed up and down in a pout, only for Shin Yu-Seung to shrug her shoulders and smile back at her. "What if we write it too hard to understand and Dok-Ja ahjussi doesn't get it?"

"……Kim Dok-Ja will definitely get it."

"You really do believe in him, don't you?"

"If you're going to bother me like this, just get out."

"No, wait! I've organised everything that happened in the past, you know! Even the

'Disaster of Flood' you asked me about, I have……"

Not everyone was as helpful as Shin Yu-Seung, though. No, actually, the majority of them simply interfered with her writing, instead. For instance, in Jang Ha-Yeong's case:

"Hey, you!! You said I'm the second part's protagonist! What are you basing that on?!

You making fun of me??"

"That's just a figure of speech. You're not the real protagonist, right?" Han Su-Yeong replied.

"Even then!"

"I'll write side stories about you. In huge chapters, no less."

"Cool."

Yi Seol-Hwa passing by while pushing a stretcher past the room also said something.

"Normally, healers in a story like this are portrayed as heal shuttles, aren't they?"

“…Fine. Yi Seol-Hwa, you get a side story, too."

On top of this, Yi Gil-Yeong completely skipping his school to come to the hospital, and Yi Hyeon-Seong, throwing a big tantrum as if he had been wronged by something.

"You just omitted all the events I had to go through after signing the contract with Abaddon! And also, I've lots of skills so why is it always cockroaches this and cockroaches that?!"

"You've completely revised my military life! But, haven't I earnestly described everything that happened since my days as a private……!"

"Both of you, will you just put a lid on it?! Kim Dok-Ja is the main character of this story! I'm telling you, this isn't your story!" Han Su-Yeong yelled at them.

Even Constellations came to visit one by one after hearing about the news.

For instance, Uriel carrying huge piles of unidentifiable documents while kitted out in a disguise of sunglasses and a face mask.

[You should've called me right away if you were planning to write something like this!

And I have this much extensive data on the subject matter, too!]

“……Can any of this data even be trusted? I mean, what you said

differed quite a lot from what Yi Ji-Hye told me, you know?"

[N-no, well, it can be a tiiiiny bit different, but, but! This universe is truly vast and countless Kim Dok-Jas are living out there in countless world-lines, so…]

After that, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

[If you're going to write about my Fable, you should've at least read the fully translated Journey to the West. Have you?]

"I read it as manga."

[In that case, you should know by now who the real protagonist of the Journey to the West is.]

"I thought it was Tang Sanzang?"

Then, the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon.

[How disappointing. Have you really forgotten about my true name? It's already the second part, so how come my true name hasn't been-]

"You never told me in the first place. And you know what, you don't have to tell me, either."

And so – around the time the first draft of the manuscript with about 250 chapters was completed, Han Su-Yeong became almost completed wasted from all the fatigue building up inside her. It'd be her first time writing a novel so arduously like this. So many parts of it weren't to her liking, and too many portions needed lots of revising.

But right now, the 'quantity' was her priority. Because…

- Han Su-Yeong. It'll be this week, Saturday.

…Because, there wasn't a lot of time left, that's why.

Fin.

Now normally, you'd need around two years at most to complete the first draft of a manuscript. However, there was no such leeway in this world-line.

- The system is losing its powers too quickly. If we miss this week, then I fear that we won't have enough persuasive power to launch the ark.

In the end, Han Su-Yeong decided to start the first wave of transmission after finishing up the second part of the manuscript.

The companions grew excited after hearing about the news of the manuscript's dispatch.

Yu Sang-Ah asked. "How will you transport the file? In a USB?"

"We'll prepare for various contingencies, but… Fundamentally, it needs to be taken in the form of a Fable," replied Han Su-Yeong.

"Who will deliver it, though?"

"Obviously me."

"No can do. If Su-Yeong-ssi leaves, who will look after Dok-Ja-ssi of this place if something happens to him?"

Even if he was only a shell, he was still Kim Dok-Ja. If something strange happened to him and Han Su-Yeong possessing the Bureau's Fable wasn't around, his main body might crumble away.

Yu Sang-Ah continued on. "Let me go. I know the exact coordinates of the world-line where Dok-Ja-ssi has reincarnated."

But that only prompted Jeong Hui-Won to try to dissuade her. "Sang-Ah-ssi, you need to defend this world, you know! Let me go. Give me the coordinates."

"No way! I'll go and meet hyung!"

"I'm ahjussi's Incarnation, so obviously I should go!"

"That's not right. I'm the foremost expert on all things related to the 'Demon King of Salvation', so it should be me……!"

Yi Gil-Yeong, Shin Yu-Seung and even Jang Ha-Yeong joined the fray, turning the inside of the hall into pure chaos. Constellations and Incarnations were arguing with each other, saying they should be the one to make the trip.

Yu Sang-Ah sighed while looking at them. "It's not as easy as you all think. Everyone here is aware of how dangerous it is to cross a world-line, yes?"

"Well, yeah……”

"If the coordinate I traced is correct, then the world-line in question is right at the outer-most edge of the universe."

"Outer-most edge?"

"Meaning, it's a world where 'scenarios' might not even exist."

No one knew what the world Kim Dok-Ja had reincarnated into was like. It could be fundamentally different from their Earth.

"The system's grace could get much weaker when you reach there. Which means, the powers of both skills and Stigmata will naturally weaken, as well. The length of the voyage will be quite an ask, too."

Anna Croft listening to the explanation nodded her head in agreement. She then looked up at the ark currently performing a test flight up in the sky. "As the vessel has been cobbled together as a single-seater, the equipment installed on board isn't the greatest. Especially when you're crossing the Dark Stratum, enduring the storm of aftermath will prove to be a massive challenge. Only the person possessing a very powerful mind is qualified. One mistake, and you may even end up as an 'Outer God', that's why."

The 'Outer God' – that term cast a dark shadow on the expressions of a handful of the companions. They had recalled the sight of 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' doggedly

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pursuing them, that's why.

Unfortunately, Anna Croft wasn't done with her explanation. "And there are far too many world-lines where his soul has scattered to, as well. At the bare minimum, you'll have to cross hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions, of world-lines… Are you prepared for that eventuality?"

Hundreds of thousands. Even if you were to cross one world-line per day, the trip might end up lasting for hundreds of years with that estimate. Even if it was for Kim Dok-Ja, could anyone be able to last that lengthy period of time without losing their sanity?

"None of you are capable."

The man who could survive even when receiving the absolute minimum grace of the system.

The man who would not lose himself even when swimming against the boundless torrents of time.

And that's why, the man with the highest odds of succeeding in this mission among the companions.

"I'll be the one to head out."

The ark's passenger had already been decided.

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Eventually, the ark's date of departure had arrived.

Han Su-Yeong observed Yu Jung-Hyeok currently getting ready to disembark from some distance away.

"I'm not putting on that thing."

"Conquering King, you must wear it. Don't forget that you're no longer the same as your past self."

Now, this was a spectacle she would've liked to show to Kim Dok-Ja of five years ago.

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If he heard about how the prophet was trying to ensure the safety of the regressor, just what would be the thoughts entering his mind?

"You're really becoming a bother."

"You might be saying that now, but this will definitely come in handy later on. Being a Transcender does not mean you're completely free from the system's influences.

Transcenders are existences validated only through their opposition to the system. If the latter disappears, then the former's powers will, of course, grow progressively weaker in turn."

Yu Jung-Hyeok glared at Anna Croft with disapproving eyes, before putting on the offered equipment one by one.

"This is a cumbersome attire for combat."

"You are not going there to fight, so it'll be fine."

Yu Jung-Hyeok's new bloated appearance after putting on the spacesuit was truly a sight to behold. Han Su-Yeong began teasing him.

"That look really suits you."

“……You're being noisy."

"You should think this over. You really wanna do this?"

Even as the departure time crept ever closer, Han Su-Yeong still didn't feel confident at all.

「Honestly speaking, maybe there was no reason to go this far.」

The voyage about to take place this time was completely different from the regression or jumping between the world-lines. They weren't trying to change the past, nor were they trying to steal the right 'materials' to open the [Final Wall] of the other worldline.

This voyage, in some ways, was much closer to a pilgrimage. One where he was trying to commemorate that one person they had been searching for all this time.

"Hand over the manuscript."

"Your manner of speech hasn't changed even though you stopped being a regressor."

Han Su-Yeong sighed and opened her right hand. The power of a Stigma she had been developing until now was circling around the tip of her hand.

[Stigma, 'Cloud System', is on stand-by.]

This was a similar method to how [The 4th Wall] handed the text files over to Kim Dok-Ja in the past.

The Stigma itself was evolved from her [Predictive Plagiarism] capable of sending obtuse messages across the world-lines.

"It's possible for those possessing this Stigma to share the manuscript. Coming back to Earth several times for the new versions will be too difficult even for you, so I'll just keep sending you the manuscripts through the cloud."

"Are you telling me to learn your unique Stigma? We don't have the time to…"

"Right, we don't have the time. But there is a way to learn it super fast. You don't have a Constellation backer anymore, do you?"

Right away, Yu Jung-Hyeok realised what Han Su-Yeong was saying. "You fool, are you really……"

"You think I'm enjoying the idea myself?"

While furrowing his brows, he accessed his attribute window. When his Stigma

[Regression] vanished, his Constellation sponsor had disappeared as well.

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Sponsor: None

+

He was a completely free man.

"Are you suggesting that I take on someone weaker than me as my backer?"

"But I won against you the last time."

"I don't understand the rubbish you're spewing."

"What, you wanna have another go?"

Even though they didn't concede an inch and continued to bicker, they still finished signing the [Sponsor Contract]. Both of them knew this was the most optimum method available, that's why.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', has become Incarnation 'Yu Jung-Hyeok's Constellation backer!]

[Incarnation, 'Yu Jung-Hyeok', has inherited the Stigma, 'Cloud System'.]

[Two beings' imaginary cloud network have been connected!]

"I've never imagined that I'd live long enough to see the day like this one. I wish I could tell that idiot Kim Dok-Ja about this somehow," muttered Han Su-Yeong.

"Once I make my way back, I'll kill you first and cancel this ridiculous contract."

"Try it if you can."

After their exchange came to an end there, they stared at each other for a little while.

"Don't forget. You must not destroy the other world-line. You just have to spread this story there. So that Kim Dok-Ja of that world will get to read it," said Han Su-Yeong.

"I know."

"Don't die."

"I'll be back soon."

He might never come back. Both of them knew that, but no one deliberately tried to bring that point up. With the exception of one person, that was.

"Oppa." The tearful Yu Mi-Ah held onto Yu Jung-Hyeok's spacesuit. "You're lying! You aren't going to come back! You can't, even if you wanted to!"

"I won't abandon you and die."

As Yu Mi-Ah continued to shed her tears, Han Su-Yeong tightly held her shoulders. Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly lowered himself and matched his little sister's eye line, then spoke in a gentle, loving tone of voice.

"I give you my word. I will definitely return."

As he turned around to leave, he sent Han Su-Yeong a message.

- Look after Mi-Ah for me.

He didn't look behind once and climbed aboard the [Final Ark]. And when Anna Croft gave her signal, the vessel's ignition was turned on.

The companions belatedly hearing about the news soon arrived and watched everything unfold.

The ark slowly rose up to the sky. The voices of the companions wouldn't have been able to enter the vessel's tightly-enclosed cockpit.

Yi Ji-Hye breathlessly running over here looked up at the departing ark.

"Aren't you going to say goodbye?" Han Su-Yeong asked her.

"If I do, I feel like it's going to be the last time I see him."

Despite saying that, Yi Ji-Hye's eyes were brimming full of tears. Other companions also looked up at the ark without saying anything.

Yu Sang-Ah broke the silence first. "Everything we wanted to say are in the novel, anyway. I'm sure Jung-Hyeok-ssi will read it later on."

"What's the point of him reading it? Hyung reading it, that's all that matters."

Yi Gil-Yeong, Shin Yu-Seung, Jeong Hui-Won, Yi Hyeon-Seong, Jang Ha-Yeong, Yu Sang-Ah, Yi Seol-Hwa, Yi Su-Gyeong, Gong Pil-Du. And then, the Constellations, too. Everyone

stood there and watched the ark leave.

Shin Yu-Seung asked. "Will Dok-Ja ahjussi really read our story?"

That was uncertain. No one in existence would know that. This mission had high odds of failure, and the odds of Yu Jung-Hyeok coming back home empty-handed were also very high.

And their story could disappear as mere cosmic dust in some distant universe.

The departing Yu Jung-Hyeok should know about that, as well. Even then, he chose to leave. He left, for his own sake. Maybe, also for other companions, too.

"If it's Kim Dok-Ja, he'll read it," replied Han Su-Yeong.

At the very least, the people of this world would be able to carry on with their lives while waiting for his news – waiting for Yu Jung-Hyeok's return.

"He made a promise with me, you see."

The ark's flames lit up as it reached towards the distant galaxy. The companions endlessly looked on at the ark getting further away as if it was an expedition ship sailing towards another world. A story written through their lives was disappearing to a place forever out of their reach.

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[The 'Ark' is entering the atmosphere.]

[Waiting for the user Yu Jung-Hyeok's destination input.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok inputted the coordinates of the world-line Yu Sang-Ah told him. Even the coordinates of the next nearest world-line to it was incredibly far away. Just as she said, that place might not have there.

[The dimensional acceleration will commence.]

[Portion of necessary energy will be substituted by the Coins.]

Coins amassed in the other world-line were injected as the energy source of the vessel.

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They had lost their value with the weakening of the system, but still, they used to be the strongest Fable in the world once upon a time. Before long, the planet Earth could no longer be seen.

[Entering the Dark Stratum to escape from the world-line.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok recalled what Yu Sang-Ah said.

- The world-line Dok-Ja-ssi has reincarnated into is located very far away. Meaning, I don't know how long it will take to get there if you leave the world-line through the conventional means.

The world Kim Dok-Ja had reincarnated into existed outside the 'Ways of Survival' – a place that had completely escaped from this world-

line's influence.

- More than likely, you'll have to go through the 'doorway' that allows you to leave this world-line.

How long passed by like this? Things resembling bubbles began appearing far ahead of him. These bubbles of various hues expanded and contracted repeatedly within the ominous currents. He even sensed this faint feeling of foreboding, too. Yu Jung-Hyeok knew what caused this feeling.

Tsu-chuchuchu……

The 'vice-king' of the 'Outer Gods', as well as the master of the dimensional doorway between the world-lines. And the existence that opened the path to the 1863rd turn for Kim Dok-Ja once upon a time. Yu Jung-Hyeok unknowingly swallowed back his own saliva. This thing before him possessed more than enough power to make him nervous, the man who managed to clear the scenarios.

[[Y o u a r e…… n o t t h e P l o t t e r.]]

A massive eye could be seen within the sea of foams. Yu Jung-Hyeok increased the speed of the ark, not even trying to dodge that eye. In order to get to the world-line at the furthest edge of the universe, he simply had to go through this path.

[[T h a t i s outside t h e story]]

"Doesn't matter. Step away, or I'll cut you down."

Yu Jung-Hyeok aroused every bit of his Fables and pushed the ark forward. The vice-king didn't try to stop him. However, it only spoke in a pitying, empty-sounding tone of voice.

[[Oh, t h e o n e dreaming o f t h e dream's outside, y o u r dream c a n n o t b e f u l f i l l e d.]]

The moment he collided with the doorway, the view before his eyes completely distorted. He gritted his teeth and fought back against the storm pouncing on him.

A violent storm of sparks began ravaging and devouring his entire body. He endured the urge to scream as horrifying pain akin to his whole body breaking apart took him over.

- There's one last thing I wanted to ask you about.

Han Su-Yeong's voice trickled past inside his disoriented head.

- Why are you going so far to save Kim Dok-Ja? You've lost many comrades by now already.

- Having lost many comrades before doesn't mean you become accustomed to the pain of loss. And also…

Explosions began going off inside the ark. Debris from the broken instruments began floating away in the universe.

-… I have something I need to ask that fool.

Yet another explosion resounded out, and an object pierced into Yu Jung-Hyeok's torso.

[Failed to read the world-line's coordinates!]

[Warning! An error has occurred in the coordinate recognition device!]

[An error has occurred in the interior temperature modulation device!]

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[An error has occurred in the ship's navigation system!]

Sparks exploding abruptly dominated Yu Jung-Hyeok's entire body. His vision was dyed in pure white, and his consciousness faded away.

By the time he managed to open his eyes, he was already lost in space.

Fin.

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「4th day of drifting.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok barely managed to regain his consciousness and discovered a sharp piece of debris stabbing him in his abdomen. He calmly got rid of the debris and checked the status of the vessel's hull.

「6th day of drifting.」

He realised that the ark had completely lost all its functions. The navigation system was unresponsive, and he couldn't see a single thing nearby. As a matter of fact, he couldn't even see a single planet nearby.

「11th day of drifting.」

With several of the safety systems installed within the ark destroyed, abnormality began manifesting in Yu Jung-Hyeok's body.

[System's homeostasis is currently broken!]

[Power of chaos is eroding your entire body.]

[Your Fable is crumbling away little by little.]

Some kind of a problem must've occurred somewhere, because all the abilities realised through the system had become completely paralysed. Yu Jung-Hyeok remained calm as he inspected the Fables currently with him. Thankfully, his Fables were all safe.

[Fable, 'Hellscape of Eternity', is enveloping you.]

The flames of hell protected him from the bitter coldness.

「21st day of drifting.」

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The spacesuit Anna Croft made him wear really did come in handy. If it weren't for the built-in protective functionality of the suit, the rate of his body crumbling away would've been so much faster.

Yu Jung-Hyeok did whatever he could to repair the ark's power source. Although the job performed wasn't of professional quality, the vessel still started moving again.

Unfortunately, the collision caused the fuel tank reserved for a rainy day to blow up, and the ark needed his Fable energy to operate.

He failed to repair the self-navigation system and the auto-pilot, though. Meaning, he had to pilot the craft personally.

「34th day of drifting.」

He needed to somehow find his original route.

「42nd day of drifting.」

As the days of his Fable needing to be exhausted increased, fatigue began accumulating in his body. Instances of him briefly losing his consciousness happened more and more frequently. The darkness was eating away at his mind.

…Why did I come this far?

There were moments when his purpose would become blurry, uncertain. He came this far to carry out his mission. To deliver a 'story' to the reincarnated Kim Dok-Ja. To revive the 'Kim Dok-Ja' his companions remembered.

Why, though? He still had something he simply had to ask Kim Dok-Ja, that's why.

…But what was the question?

「58th day of drifting.」

The moment he saw a wane face reflected on the ark's window, Yu Jung-Hyeok recalled the forgotten question.

- In a world where the scenarios have come to an end, what should he do to continue living on?

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That's right. That's what he wanted to ask Kim Dok-Ja. Because that guy knew everything.

Kim Dok-Ja, always thinking about the end. The man who planned for everything, and didn't hesitate to sacrifice his own life to see the conclusion of a certain story.

A fool like that should know, he thought.

If it was Kim Dok-Ja, then he should know more about Yu Jung-Hyeok than Yu Jung-Hyeok knew about himself. That's what the latter thought.

The regressor who stopped regressing – just what would become of him?

Yi Ji-Hye said that she suffered from nightmares every night.

But for him, his life had been a constant nightmare for the longest time. The only reason why he managed to endure until now was because he still had a goal, an aim, which he hadn't achieved yet. However, that goal was now no more, and the scenario had ended, as well.

The regressor Yu Jung-Hyeok was free.

But as he stood before the hard-earned freedom, he couldn't figure out what exactly he had finally earned.

「83rd day of drifting.」

As his directionless drifting went on and on, the Fables covering his skin decreased precipitously. The amount of Fable scattering into space gradually increased.

His voyage continued on, but he didn't even know where he was heading to.

「102rd day of drifting.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok began reading Han Su-Yeong's novel.

He thought that by reading it, he'd be able to endure against time, somehow.

「111th day of drifting.」

While reading about Kim Dok-Ja's story, he began to harbour this faint hint of anticipation.

He thought that the Kim Dok-Ja from this story should be able to answer his question.

From the first episode onwards, he studiously read about Kim Dok-Ja's life.

Some events he already knew, while some others were unfamiliar to him. He'd stop reading when he reached certain sentences, too.

「That feeling of being left alone past the full stop of the story, right after the protagonist and the side characters all stepped into the sentence of 'Everyone lived happily ever after'. Struck by the sense of emptiness and betrayal, the young me couldn't fight against the loneliness and writhed around in pain.」

What was 'happiness'? That term felt so very alien to Yu Jung-Hyeok. He thought he might have felt such an emotion from somewhere within the memories of the 0th turn that he managed to steal a glance earlier. However, that was no longer his life.

「128th day of drifting.」

To him, the figure of Kim Dok-Ja relying on nothing else besides the 'Ways of Survival'

to survive came across as alien. He read many times, yet he just couldn't understand it very well.

How could a mere story like this be able to support a life?

「154th day of drifting.」

Little by little, Yu Jung-Hyeok grew accustomed to reading the novel.

He even found some passages that he liked reading over and over again.

「I grabbed the hind leg rich in the perfect amount of fat and bit into the flesh. The gravy gently oozing out from the meat… I closed my eyes, having even forgotten to chew. As I thought, reading about it and actually tasting it are two different things.」

It was a scene that happened early on, when Kim Dok-Ja and the companions had recently entered the scenarios – when they roasted

the meat from the mole rats. Yu

Jung-Hyeok pulled out a slice of dried meat from inside his coat underneath the spacesuit and began chewing on it while reading that passage again. He slowly closed his eyes and chewed, and it almost felt as if he was with the companions within the damp darkness of the subway.

「155th day of drifting.」

But when he opened his eyes, he was still all alone.

Yu Jung-Hyeok dazedly sitting there began reading the novel again.

「211th day of drifting.」

He continued to read this story all by himself, and…

「258th day of drifting.」

…And, read the story again.

「279th day of drifting.」

He finally understood Kim Dok-Ja just a little.

「316th day of drifting.」

[Your Fables have absorbed your emotions.]

Every time he read Han Su-Yeong's novel, the consumed Fables would regain their vitality for fleeting moments. Although it couldn't match the speed of consumption, he wouldn't have been able to hold on until now if he didn't read the story.

However, he couldn't simply hold on forever.

Kim Dok-Ja within the novel was saying this.

「"That's why you should've read it until the end, you know."」

What did it mean to read a story to its end?

Although he couldn't fully understand it, Yu Jung-Hyeok still chose to heed that advice.

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「333th day of drifting.」

Abruptly, he realised the reason why his failure was inevitable.

「"Even if you manage to save the world, you still won't be saved. The moment you save the world, the worlds you have cast away would pounce on you. Even if you do save one world, every other world you have forsaken will drag you down to hell."」

Yu Jung-Hyeok stared at the distant universe and thought to himself.

What could've it been like if this was the first, or the second, regression turn? What if he had completely forgotten about the memories from his previous lives? If he had no clue whatsoever of the lives from his previous regressions, then maybe, just maybe, couldn't he have found his answer already, instead of wandering aimlessly like this?

Maybe, he wouldn't have to suffer like this?

Could he have finally understood what the 'happy ending' of other stories was like?

Could he have moved forward, in order to not die?

Ku-gugugugu…

The ark's hull began vibrating. Wondering what was going on, he enhanced his perception to sweep over the surroundings, only to discover a huge horde dyeing the universe ash-grey. They were

existences he was quite familiar with.

[[OhOhOhOhOhOhOh……!]]

Existences that were discarded from the world-lines, and ejected from the scenarios.

The enormous waves of 'Outer Gods' were flooding in his direction. A faint scent of fear could be picked up coming from them. They were being chased by some things.

Kwa-du-duk!

One of the 'Nameless Ones' escaping at the rear of the pack was pierced by something.

Soon, he spotted the 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' easily numbering thousands chasing down the 'Outer Gods' like wolves corralling the flock of sheep.

Every time a 'Nameless One' was hunted down, an incredible explosion of sparks

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occurred in between the flood. The storm of energy was gradually growing larger and larger. At this rate, his vessel would get swept up much sooner than later.

[[SavemeSavemeSavemeSaveme]]

Eventually, the front pack of the flood overtook the ark. The 'Nameless Ones'

desperately ran. The eyes of the creatures resembling cephalopods glanced in Yu Jung-Hyeok's direction.

Craaack!

A monster's body was pierced through without resistance by the hound's fangs. The pitch-black lump of Fable spewing out by the dying monster splattered onto the cockpit's window like paint. The cephalopod monster was staring at him in resentment as it fell.

Yu Jung-Hyeok had seen those eyes before, once upon a time.

「"If so, what about the people who are different from me? What about Ji-Hye eonni, Hyeon-Seong oppa, and Seol-Hwa eonni? Those who fought only for your sake, just who were they to you??"」

Right at that moment, Yu Jung-Hyeok thought he could finally understand what his ■■

was.

He understood how a regressor finished with his regressions should carry on living.

He understood the true conclusion he was supposed to reach.

From the very beginning, such a thing could never be determined by his own will alone.

[The Ark's cockpit is opening.]

The moment he opened the cockpit, the hounds began rushing in his direction.

Yu Jung-Hyeok gripped the [Dark Heavenly Demon Sword] in reverse and cut the head off of a hound. The waves from the other world splitting apart, brushed past while clawing at him.

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[[WhatWhatWhatWhatWhat]]

[[YouareYouareYouareYouareYouare]]

He watched the 'Nameless Ones' flood past him and recalled the story he had been reading not too long ago.

Maybe, Han Su-Yeong knew about it already.

「"You wrote my story. In that case, you should also know where my story is supposed to end."」

She probably knew the truth that this story would never reach the reincarnated Kim Dok-Jas.

That was why, he must never return to Earth.

He must never let his companions know of his survival.

His absence must become their eternal hope.

And maybe that was the fitting final verse to the regressor who had destroyed countless worlds.

[[Grrrrrr……!]]

As he continued to smack away the pouncing hounds, Yu Jung-Hyeok thought about the disappearing story.

"Be gone!!"

His lion-like roar using magical energy as the foundation caused the hounds hiding in between the 'Outer Gods' to raise their heads. These hounds then formed lines and attacked Yu Jung-Hyeok simultaneously. His arms were punctured, and the protective equipment worn over his legs were torn off from him. Fables began leaking out from the ripped-open gaps of the tattered spacesuit. Bit by bit, he was losing his strength.

His lengthy regression journey.

Yu Jung-Hyeok instinctively realised that this was his conclusion.

'This is the end I wished to see.'

It could've been a slightly more excellent conclusion.

If he had made a different choice back then, or maybe, if he chose to go down the better direction, then…… Yu Jung-Hyeok smiled bitterly.

In the end, he remained a regressor even until his final moment.

He knew it. He knew there was no better conclusion than this. He knew that, regardless of what choices he might have made in different moments of his life, he'd still end up regretting something about them.

Even then, he'd regret and eventually, repeat the result of all his regretting.

[[YouYouYouYouYouYou]]

[[WhoWhoWhoWhoWho]]

That was the summary of his life.

"I'm Yu Jung-Hyeok."

At least a handful of people would be saved by his life.

Kwa-aaaaaah-!

Thousands upon thousands of hounds pounced in his direction. As if he was atoning for his sins, Yu Jung-Hyeok wielded his sword and wielded it some more. With each and every one of his attacks, those 'Nameless Ones' with forgotten names received their salvation.

Coldness began circulating in his entire body. The amount of Fable leaking out from the tattered spacesuit continued to increase. He felt dizzy and his vision flickered. Yu Jung-Hyeok squeezed out every last drop of magical energy.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Destruction Technique.

Breaking the Sky Meteor Strike.

The vicious, violent fragments of the sword fell like a meteor shower and penetrated the hounds. However, some hounds managed to evade the sword strike and continued to run towards him.

[[Krrrrrng!!]]

Right next second, something collided with his head and the helmet protecting his face broke into pieces.

[Warning! Your Fable is scattering away. Return to the ark immediately!]

[Your Fable is……]

Adrift droplets of blood were freezing up. Hounds were tearing into his entire body.

And the story Han Su-Yeong had written were breaking apart among the torn, ripped Fable fragments scattering away.

'…Mi-Ah-yah.'

Fables kept scattering away like stardust. Yu Jung-Hyeok watched that spectacle and quietly thought about the lonely space no one would ever imagine. The 'Nameless Ones' were witnessing his final moments with their empty eyes.

This story they had compiled would be forgotten sooner or later.

It'd become a story no one would read.

Yu Jung-Hyeok summoned the last vestiges of his strength and gripped the hilt of the sword tightly. He stabbed the neck of the hound biting his thigh, and cut apart its body.

A regressor might only know how to regret, but he'd never give up.

「"Maybe this regression turn you are about to abandon could be the 'one single turn'

where you might get to witness the end of this world as a 'human being', you know."」

The one and only way for him to live on as a human being.

And that was to never give up on this story.

Kwa-duduk!

Something bit his neck, and his vision was dyed crimson in colour.

His eyes slowly closed. This really was his final moments.

Tsu-chuchu……

However, he saw the darkness before his eyes distort as his vision gradually blurred.

Was he hallucinating? Something was standing over there. The ends of the black coat were seemingly dancing within the pure-white Fable fragments.

[[What a pitiful sight this is, the third turn.]]

Someone was talking to him from there.

[[This will be my last time helping you.]]

Fin.

Yu Jung-Hyeok dreamed a particular dream. It was about the time he participated in the 'Journey to the West scenario' with the rest of the

members. In the dream, he was running on top of the Tongtian River's surface. He could see the figures of Jeong Hui-Won, Yu Sang-Ah, Yi Hyeon-Seong and Shin Yu-Seung running next to him.

[[Notnotnotnotnotnotnot]]

Yogoes were screaming out their death throes repeatedly.

His memories grew clearer and clearer. Right, they were participating in the Journey to the West in order to rescue Kim Dok-Ja.

But then… where was Kim Dok-Ja?

Tsu-chuchuchu……

[[… What a pathetic sight this is. With only this much, you actually dared to come out to the 'outside of the story'?]]

A voice could be heard coming from somewhere.

[[I was wondering why dangerous Fable ripples could be detected in the vicinity, but…

He was the cause, then.]]

[[What are we going to do, captain?]]

[[We decided not to interfere anymore, right? Are you really going to help him?]]

Voices that were familiar, yet also quite foreign to him.

Was this a part of his memories? Who could have said those words?

Suddenly, the front of his eyes seemed to get darker, only to reveal a pitch-black shadow standing there and blocking the light. An Outer God stood in the middle of the dim shadows. Even without consciously realising it, Yu Jung-Hyeok began emitting fighting intent.

Right. He did fight against this bastard back then, too. The other him who had witnessed the world's end after living through 1863 regressions – the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Even before Yu Jung-Hyeok could use a skill, though – the 'Secretive Plotter' spoke up first.

[[Did you really think the end of a regressor will be that easy?]]

The Tongtian River was upturned. Yogoes rising up from every corner of the river's surface pounced on Yu Jung-Hyeok. The discarded stories clung onto his body all at the same time. The forgotten Fables were being sucked into his mouth and nose. He gradually sank beneath the water as the head-wrecking pain swallowed him up.

[[Do not forget. We aren't even permitted the luxury of death.]]

With that true voice as the signal, his view was flipped around. Yu Jung-Hyeok woke up heavily panting as if he was vomiting out the river's water. Yogoes that clung onto him in the dream were nowhere to be seen now, having disappeared to somewhere unknown. However, someone else's presence could be felt, instead.

[Whew. You really shocked me there, making me think you were dead and all.]

A clear, gentle voice greeted him. Yu Jung-Hyeok shook his still-dizzy head. A blurry figure was before his eyes. A warm, caring aura emitted from this silhouette gently wrapped around his entire body.

…Was he still dreaming?

His vision recovered gradually, and the face of the blurry figure could finally be seen.

Yu Jung-Hyeok hurriedly rubbed his eyes without even realising it. Was he hallucinating, instead? This young girl's external appearance resembled Kim Dok-Ja's, somehow. Her eyes sparkling like stars were quietly observing him.

[I didn't expect to see you here, captain. You probably can understand now how I felt while wandering around the world-lines. Right?]

This child, she…

[You don't have to worry. I've already repaired most of your scattered Fable, you see.

And just in case, I've even started a sub scenario so you should be fine for the time being.]

Could she be…

[That's so disappointing. Do I have to speak like this for you to recognise me?]

As the girl smiled mischievously, a small horn suddenly grew out of her head. Her lips parted a little, and a familiar cry he'd been missing for so long jumped out.

[Ba-aht.]

*

"Has master got in touch yet?"

"Nope. I'm sure he's taking good care of things," replied Han Su-Yeong.

It had already been three months since Yu Jung-Hyeok left on his voyage. The work on the manuscript continued on without a hitch, and the updates were continuously being sent through the Cloud System.

[Number of file downloads: 0]

However, Yu Jung-Hyeok had not logged in once to the Cloud System using the Stigma during the past three months.

'Yu Jung-Hyeok, that idiot. Just what is he doing?'

The ominous foreboding slowly mushroomed in Han Su-Yeong's heart. She even began thinking that maybe she should've been the one to head out.

Yu Mi-Ah was next to her, sweating profusely while performing a series of press-ups.

"I'll become strong enough to break both of my oppa's legs."

Han Su-Yeong looked at Yu Mi-Ah and the girl's blazing eyes, and could only nod her

head as a sign of encouragement.

And how long did she tap on the keyboard afterwards? Suddenly, a message entered her head.

[Your Incarnation has logged into the 'Cloud System'.]

*

After Biyu heard about the general gist of the situation, she responded in the following manner.

[…Okay, so. You'll spread the story you receive via Han Su-Yeong's

Stigma to other world-lines. That's the core of the plan, right?]

"Correct."

[And you're hoping that the reincarnated versions of Dok-Ja ahjussi will read that story.]

"Also correct."

[Not bad. To think that you'd come up with a plan to take advantage of the 'Most Ancient Dream's nature like this……]

"I also thought it's not a bad-sounding p……"

[…Did you really think I'd be impressed by that plan? How did you even cook up such a hair-brained scheme, seriously?!]

…Was Biyu's personality originally like this?

[But then again, captain, you're completely capable of doing something this crazy without batting an eyelid.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok frowned deeply at that somewhat mocking tone of voice. The more he heard her talk, the more she began sounding like Kim Dok-Ja for some reason.

[The odds of success are not very good, you know.]

"I know."

[The 'Most Ancient Dream' of that world-line might not even read the story. And the more advanced a civilisation is, the less important the contents made up purely of letters becomes. So you may not even get a chance to approach such a world, too.]

"Before that, crossing the world-lines is the biggest problem."

Yu Jung-Hyeok stared at the half-destroyed ark. Although he got lucky

with Biyu's help and managed to survive, it was impossible to visit other world-lines without the vessel.

Biyu thought about something for a while then spoke what's in her mind. [Why can't you go? What are the coordinates? Give to me.]

With a slightly unconvinced face, Yu Jung-Hyeok handed over the list of coordinates Yu Sang-Ah gave him earlier. Biyu confirmed all the world-lines on it and smiled refreshingly.

[You do know who I am, right? I'm none other than the 'Dokkaebi King', you know.]

It was right then, Yu Jung-Hyeok recalled an obvious fact.

The [Final Ark] was an item belonging to the Bureau. And the top representative of the Bureau was precisely the 'Dokkaebi King'.

[Can you guess what I had been doing in the 'Dark Stratum'? While you and other companions went to the 1865th turn, I too had been working my butt off somewhere, that's what.]

The deep, boundless wisdom could be sensed behind Biyu's eyes drawing a smiling arc.

The Dark Stratum. A place where the time's density was far greater than any other spacetime.

Just how long had Biyu been staying in such a space?

She pulled out a Wenny pouch from her inner pocket and continued on.

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[I've got my hands on the dead Wenny King's dimensional doorway so jumping to the nearest world-line isn't going to be a problem at all. As for those in the far-flung distance… Well, it should be doable after repairing the ark a bit, I think. The problem is with the energy to be

used as the fuel……]

Yu Jung-Hyeok looked down at his own Incarnation body. Thanks to Biyu saving his life, most of his injuries had been healed, but the majority of his Fables were left badly mangled after they protected him for over 300 days of adrift at space, as well as during the battle against the hounds.

[I guess that's also been sorted out now, too.]

"……Mm?"

He wasn't sure how it happened, but his inside was overflowing with Fables. A truly extraordinary amount of Fables were writhing around within him, getting ready to be unleashed.

[Just where did you acquire the Fables of the 'Nameless Ones'? Not only that, such a humongous amount, too……]

Fables that had been discarded by the scenario was now trying to speak to him.

[Fables with unknown names from 'Outer Gods' wish to accompany you.]

Fables from the 'Nameless Ones' he had run across in the final scenario once upon a time. Existences born in a place no stars paid attention to, and who had to die in a place no one was looking at.

They were currently talking to Yu Jung-Hyeok.

[Fables with unknown names are picking up the scent of an ancient dream from you.]

[Now that I think about it, something felt a bit off when I was picking you up. The

'Nameless Ones' that didn't possess any ego were busy protecting you, you know?]

Yu Jung-Hyeok recalled the dream he had not too long ago – the Journey to the West scenario, the voices of the 'Secretive Plotter' as well as the 999th turn's individuals.

…But, it couldn't be.

He hurriedly enhanced his perception, but couldn't detect anything. While listening to Biyu's voice, Yu Jung-Hyeok quietly observed the view of the space spreading out like an endless ocean.

[By using those Fables as our fuel, we shouldn't have any problems travelling long distances. Okay, let's get a move on, then. The hounds' territory is nearby, so if we take our time lounging around here, things might get dicey again.]

Since Yu Jung-Hyeok had no thoughts of encountering those hounds again, he quickly nodded his head as well.

[It's a bit cramped inside for two people, so… Ba-aht!]

Pure-white and abundant fur sprouted from Biyu's body, then she suddenly shrunk down to the size of a single fist.

[Dokkaebi King 'Biyu' has started the ark's voyage!]

Along with that message, the ark's main engine came to life. The vessel left behind the blue-hued Fable traces and disappeared from there in the blink of an eye.

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…….

A short while later, five shadows appeared near where the ark used to be.

[[Do you think he'll succeed?]]

[[That's uncertain. However, this is as far as we can help him.]]

[[Let's hurry up and return, shall we? Today's the parent's day at school, after all. By the way, who agreed to go with Dok-Ja?]]

[[Me, me, me, me!!]]

[[You idiot obviously aren't qualified.]]

The 'Secretive Plotter' watched the ark disappearing beyond the distant galaxy and murmured out.

[[I pray that we don't have to run into each other again, Yu Jung-Hyeok.]]

*

Jang Ha-Yeong working on the revision of the second act yawned grandly in boredom and asked a question. "By the way, Han Su-Yeong? Can I ask you something?"

"No."

"What did you tell Yu Jung-Hyeok regarding the method of delivering the manuscript?"

Jang Ha-Yeong spoke in a tone of voice indicating her distrust of the man in question.

"I took a look, and well, besides him knowing how to play games, he didn't seem to know his way around a computer, you know? Would he even know how to upload novels to a website?"

"He can't personally serialise the novel. That would mean he'd be stuck in a world-line for too long."

"What then?"

Han Su-Yeong thought about it for a second, then muttered out. "The most ideal way would be to find someone who can serialise it for us……”

*

「The planetary system Z865123. In the year 2020 of the imperial calender…… 」

On that day, a webnovel writer named Lee Hak-Hyeon was busy writing up his manuscript inside a one-room flat for students, only to get into a verbal tussle with his editor over the phone.

- Author-nim, just what are you planning to write this time? What's the title of the novel?

“……It's the Me-sword Master."

- The Me-sword Master? What is it about?

"Okay, so… The protagonist is a method actor in a fantasy world, and he eventually masters his acting skills and also becomes a swordmaster……”

- Ah, I see. That's enough. By the way, didn't I tell you many times before to never start with the line 'imperial calender' this and that?

Lee Hak-Hyeon listened to the editor's voice continuing on for a long while afterwards, and his expression became gloomier and gloomier.

- Have you forgotten what happened with your previous novel? Author-nim, please think about this carefully. I beg of you…

Lee Hak-Hyeon recalled his previous outputs.

His debut work, 「「Orc Philosopher」」, completely tanked with a pathetically embarrassing score – this novel's paywalled chapters were bought only by his best friend and no one else besides – and the follow-up he wrote with much fanfare,

「「How to Become a Famous Author」」 also tanked pretty hard

because, well, he was not a famous author, to begin with. And just like that, this was his third try.

"Those who will succeed, will succeed. While those who won't, won't. I'm the latter, I guess."

He was three months behind on his rent, and with what little money he had on him, it'd be difficult to even buy tonight's dinner.

Lee Hak-Hyeon stared at the empty Korean word processor page, before rushing up to the rooftop of the building. The ground as seen from the fifth floor looked pretty far enough.

“……Nah. Even then, this is… Hah-ah…… Ng?"

Lee Hak-Hyeon rubbed his eyes. Was he hallucinating? Something was wavering before his eyes.

"What's going on? My tears?"

A man was standing there. Not just any man, but an incredibly handsome dude wearing a black coat, no less. And a figurine with fluffy fur was sitting on this man's shoulder. Even a blind could see that this guy was someone extraordinary.

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He'd be pretty much perfect as a protagonist from a novel, in a way…

"You over there. You seem to be a webnovel author."

The black coat-wearing man's powerful aura caused Lee Hak-Hyeon's legs to tremble even unbeknownst to himself. The latter managed to eke out a reply. "Y-yes, I am."

"In that case, you should know how to serialise a novel, then."

"Well, that……”

It was at that moment that a realisation dawned on Lee Hak-Hyeon. He'd heard about this weird rumour from someone, somewhere – a legendary tale of those authors who mysteriously vanished from the world, only to triumphantly return with stunning epics in tow. The tale of incredible luck that only a select handful of writers are blessed with.

Lee Hak-Hyeon realised what kind of a situation this was, and his shoulders began trembling.

'I-i-is this the chosen author cliche ??'

If all the webnovels he had read so far had some dose of reality in them, then that black coat-wearing man should take Lee Hak-Hyeon into the world of a novel. And then, he'd ask the latter to fix the conclusion written by another writer. The latter would utilise his brain honed by cliche s to its fullest extent and go on to perform truly fantastical feats.

"Yes, yes! I know how to do it! I shall change your world's future!"

"…??"

"Please, hurry and take me with you! I may look like this, but I'm a pro webnovel author with prior experience in paid serialisation……"

A dull thud rang out as something hit the back of Lee Hak-Hyeon's head. He blacked out immediately.

*

[Wait a minute, captain!! What are you doing, knocking the guy out!!]

Biyu cried out sharply.

They were currently in the planetary system Z865123. They had to go through no less than 17 layers of [Dark Stratum] from Earth they had

been living in to barely reach this world-line.

"It couldn't be helped. He was too talkative."

[…Now what are we going to do?]

Yu Jung-Hyeok began pulling out several instruments from his inner pocket. "From now on, we need to forcibly insert the novel Han Su-Yeong has written into this man's brain."

[What are you talking about?! Do you even know how long that will take?! Are you going to brainwash people like this every time you enter a new world-line??]

"That is……"

When he thought about it, he realised that this method could only take them so far.

They couldn't stick around and keep their eyes on this man forever, and the brainwashing could stop working after Yu Jung-Hyeok had left this world-line.

[You said that Han Su-Yeong hadn't finished writing the novel yet, right? We don't have the time to visit this world again later. At this rate, even if we hand over the novel, the serialisation might stop in the middle, you know!]

"Han Su-Yeong, that fool……"

[Stop blaming someone else, and activate that thing called Cloud System or something.

Hurry.]

Since she sounded as if she had a plan here, Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't argue and did as he was told.

[Sync your display with mine.]

Biyu then began browsing and poking at the [Cloud System]'s files floating up before

her eyes. Soon, her hands stopped moving before a specific file.

[Dokkaebi King 'Biyu' is trying to approach the Cloud System using the authority of the Bureau.]

[Will you allow the access to the portion of the files?]

Yu Jung-Hyeok clicked on the confirmation icon. When he did, a transparent thread extended out from the file and got connected to the head of the unconscious webnovel writer.

[Dokkaebi King 'Biyu' has exercised her authority and altered the 'Cloud System'.]

[The system's influence is minimal in this worldview. Additional Probability will be consumed!]

[The set-up, 'Inspiration Sharing', has been created!]

Biyu wiped away the strands of sweat from her forehead and spoke. [I've synchronised the cloud's files with this guy's subconsciousness. From now on, the stories Han Su-Yeong writes in the future will be updated automatically to this guy's subconscious mind.]

Now that was a truly stunning Fable manipulation ability. Even Han Su-Yeong needed quite a lot of time to create a single Stigma, so this…

Yu Jung-Hyeok asked her. "Is this method safe? What if this fool unnecessarily starts suspecting something……?"

[Suspect? Not very likely. No, he's gonna love the change, actually. I mean, he's being showered by inspirations, so which writer wouldn't welcome that with open arms?

He'll definitely believe that he's the one writing this story.]

Biyu smirked and looked down at the still-unconscious man. Yu Jung-Hyeok alternated his gaze between such Biyu and the unmoving webnovel writer as a strange little thought crept into his mind. Could it be that a 'novel', any novel, was written like this, to begin with?

Biyu lightly knocked on the head of the unconscious writer and spoke.

[He will probably think that a muse came to bless him or something.]

*

When Lee Hak-Hyeon opened his eyes again, he found himself slumped over his own desk.

“……Was I dreaming? Urgh……”

He slowly got up and wiped his mouth, then began massaging his temples.

That was one strangely vivid dream. A dream where he was being threatened by a man wearing a black coat. And then, there was a figuring floating in the air, seemingly made out of a lump of wool… It seemed rather likely that, him secluding himself in this small room for too long while attempting to write something, had finally pushed him over the edge.

Lee Hak-Hyeon spat out a long, long groan and switched on the once-empty notebook screen. But on it was…

「There are three ways to survive in a ruined world.」

…A sentence he didn't remember typing was there.

On top of this, his hands were actually moving on their own to continue typing away.

「My ancient smartphone displaying the webnovel platform struggled to move through the screen. I scrolled down, then up. How many times did I do that, I wondered.

"Really? Is that really the end??"」

“……Oh?"

Lee Hak-Hyeon looked at his hands typing away at a frightening turn of speed and began wondering if he had finally lost his mind. Hell, he thought that he could even hear some sort of a voice coming from within his mind, too.

…You tanked badly the last time by making the author the protagonist. How about making the reader the protagonist this time around?

「Kim Dok-Ja(金獨子). My father wanted me to become a tough man even if I was left alone so he gave me such a name.」

When he typed one sentence, another one would pop up in his head, and when he finished typing that one, yet another would appear in his mind. Inspirations surged in him like a powerful waterfall.

By the time he regained his wits, he had already completed the prologue as well as the first chapter.

「This was the moment when my life's genre had changed.」

Lee Hak-Hyeon dazedly stared at the screen for a long time, before calling the editor on the phone.

"Uhm, editor-nim? It looks like I might become successful, after all……”

Fin.

It had been one year and two months since Yu Jung-Hyeok had left on his journey.

The speed of the manuscript being updated started slowing down around the time the third part was nearing completion. Even though the manuscript was still being compiled diligently, there were just too many voids yet to be filled up.

As the chapter number got higher and higher, stories Han Su-Yeong didn't know of seemed to also increase in number, as well.

"This might prove to be helpful, at least by a little bit," said Aileen.

If she didn't extract Fable fragments from the sleeping Kim Dok-Ja, the work on the manuscript would've slowed down even further.

[Fable fragment, 'Great adventure in the Dark Castle', has been successfully extracted.]

[Fable fragment, 'Memories of 1863rd regression turn', has been successfully extracted.]

[Fable fragment, 'Gourmet Association Story', has been successfully extracted.]

These fragments were stories too small to become Fables. Han Su-Yeong read these fragments and filled in the previously-lacking inside of Kim Dok-Ja. Even then, far too many parts remained empty. She didn't try to forcibly fill those voids, however.

[Your Incarnation has logged into the 'Cloud System'.]

Yu Sang-Ah asked. "It looks like Jung-Hyeok-ssi is doing well."

"Well, he's probably busy scaring the living daylights out of the poor webnovel authors," replied Ham Su-Yeong.

"I'm curious about what other authors are like. Surely, not everyone is like you, Su-Yeong-ssi?"

"Well, no, not everyone's like… Hey, did you come here just to grind my gears?"

"The author in question may not even be a person when I think about it. It could be a highly-developed AI, or……"

Han Su-Yeong reluctantly nodded her head. Indeed, the universe was vast and lots of writers existed out there. And also, writers who got a beating from Yu Jung-Hyeok should be plenty, too.

In any case – judging from how timely the revised manuscript was being downloaded, that dude must've been doing his job properly so far.

But then…

[Your Incarnation is revising the manuscript you have written.]

"……What??"

*

[…Captain, what are you doing??]

"I'm fixing the incorrect portion."

Yu Jung-Hyeok was in the midst of revising the updated file in real-time while logging into the [Cloud System]. Originally, it was

impossible for an Incarnation like him to revise a file updated to the [Cloud System], but…

[Your attribute's effects are activating.]

[You can now revise the 'Cloud System's' manuscript.]

[Revision of the already recorded contents requires a great amount of Probability!]

But, it became possible to do so from some time ago. He couldn't quite remember just when it started, but it might have been when the attribute related to writing sleeping inside him began manifesting its powers. Maybe it had bloomed into life after acquiring the Fables of the 'Outer Gods'.

[…Won't Han Su-Yeong get really angry?]

"Even if it's her, she wouldn't have known every story there is. Some parts especially were in a total mess."

While saying that, Yu Jung-Hyeok tapped away on the holographic keyboard. Biyu seemed rather impressed by this scene and spoke up.

[Oh… Captain, your grammar is better than I thought! Since you liked swinging swords around every single day, I figured you wouldn't even know the difference between a knight and a night but this……]

It was right at that moment that Yu Jung-Hyeok's cursor suddenly began jumping around all on its own.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', has revised the latest file.]

Strange words were suddenly typed over the space where Yu Jung-Hyeok's cursor had been just now.

「Hey, you just messed with my manuscript, didn't you?! Do you really want to die that badly??」

…So, there was such a way to communicate with her, then.

Yu Jung-Hyeok calmly typed the following sentence.

「This is because you failed to store the manuscript properly.」

「What bulldust are you spewing now??」

「There were incorrect parts in the manuscript. I've left my opinions on the file, so confirm them yourself.」

After typing that, Yu Jung-Hyeok took another look at the parts he had changed.

「Yi Gil-Yeong wearing the black coat looked down arrogantly at the world with his star-like sparkling eyes and spoke up. "Hey, you sooty bastard. You're so weak." – Do you really think this part even makes any sense?」

「Yi Ji-Hye emitting noble ripples of energy like rushing torrents of a massive river

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began swinging her sword. "Water the Sky Sword Door, True Body Deep Righteousness Slash Technique, Water the Sky Destroy the Emperor Slash!!" – There is no such sword technique in the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship. Also, all the Hanja letters are incorrect.」

Han Su-Yeong was silent for a moment there.

「…… What the hell, I don't remember ever typing these sentences before? Wait, these haven't been published yet, right?」

「There are still some time left until the update, so fix them quickly.」

Yu Jung-Hyeok could pretty much figure out what happened here.

「Seriously, those two… With my notebook PC…… 」

Undoubtedly, Yi Gil-Yeong and Yi Ji-Hye must've changed the scheduled update file without Han Su-Yeong's knowledge.

Biyu observed the sentences hurriedly being revised before their very eyes and spoke up. [Looks like you two have become quite close.]

"We're merely communicating like this for the purpose of the mission."

Judging from how the revised version continued to be updated, Han Su-Yeong must've been hard at work trying to reconstruct Kim Dok-Ja's story in the most preserved, complete state.

This novel would become divorced from the reality they had to live through when more and more parts of it were filled up via dramatisation or imagination. As their goal was to recover Kim Dok-Ja, this story had to reflect the reality they had lived in.

[As long as this is a story, it's impossible to perfectly recreate something. Every story would be distorted by the narrator, after all.]

"I'm aware of that. It'd be the same even if Kim Dok-Ja himself personally wrote it."

Yu Jung-Hyeok thought about something related to that for a moment or two. If it was impossible to restore the complete 'Kim Dok-Ja' no matter which story you wrote, then

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just what was the existence called 'Kim Dok-Ja', in the first place?

Yu Jung-Hyeok shook his head.

Back then or even now, no one could know that. Well, no one in this world knew who they were exactly, after all.

He looked at Han Su-Yeong's manuscript. Those who had forgotten about themselves were probably reading her work right about now. They should be reading this sentence over here, then afterwards, read the one over there next.

What Yu Jung-Hyeok and Han Su-Yeong wished from them was just one thing – wishing for a 'happy ending' that they didn't know to become real within someone's imagination.

Wishing for the world they had never witnessed before to safely exist somewhere out there in this universe.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', has revised the latest file.]

「By the way, Yu Jung-Hyeok? Just how many years have you been wandering…… 」

[Error has occurred in the 'Cloud System' due to incorrect usage!]

[Due to the storm of Probability's aftermath, the Stigma will temporarily shut down.]

It seemed that using the manuscript in this fashion was pushing it a little too far.

Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly raised his head and looked at his face reflected on the ark's window. He could see subtle little premature grey hair spots here and there on his head.

[Captain, it's not even 100 years yet.]

"I'm aware."

[The time moves really slowly, doesn't it?]

Her voice passing them by indifferently caused Yu Jung-Hyeok to falter just a little.

Biyu still in the form of little furball was staring at the passing scenery of the Dark Stratum outside with an unreadable expression on her face. Suddenly, he became

conscious of her being Shin Yu-Seung in her previous life once more.

「"Did you know, captain? Did you know that I had to endure incredibly difficult years so that I can grant your request?"」

She was an existence who had to wander the world-lines as a lost, forgotten being for thousands of years just to pass on the information to the past regression.

Yu Jung-Hyeok's lips parted and closed several times. He eventually managed to squeeze some words out. "…… It must've been difficult."

[Right. It was really tough. I resented you a lot too, captain.]

The disaster of flood, Shin Yu-Seung. The Dokkaebi King Biyu used to have such a name once upon a time.

[Still, these days I feel relieved to have reincarnated. Because, I got to keep the promise I made with you back then.]

"The promise?"

[Back when I was still Shin Yu-Seung, you promised me this, captain. You said, we'd go on a trip together after the scenario comes to an end.]

While listening to Biyu's voice continue on, he began digging through 41st turn's memories. Maybe it was due to the memories given to him by the Secretive Plotter, he could just about barely recall some things about that day. Shin Yu-Seung, talking to him about what she wanted to do after the scenario had ended.

The 41st turn's Yu Jung-Hyeok couldn't keep that promise.

「"Shin Yu-Seung, you're the last one."」

His companions died one by one, and during the final moments, he sent Shin Yu-Seung away to the outside of the world-line.

The memories from that day – just where did the moments from that day disappear to?

He didn't know. They could have become the 'Nameless Ones'.

"I……”

[Let me say this right now. Don't apologise. The person who should apologise, and the person that apology is intended for, they don't exist in this world anymore.]

She was right. In a way, the person saying it and the person listening right now weren't exactly the right people. Yu Jung-Hyeok had lost the 41st turn's life, and he had forgotten most of the memories from that period of history ever since Biyu reincarnated. It was now just an old story that connected them. They thought about that story for a little while.

[Shall we get going, then?]

"Alright."

All they could do for now was to complete this lengthy journey, and also, to find the suitable intermediary who could deliver their story.

"This time, the married couple writers over there look to be good candidates."

More than likely, this trip would last for much longer.

But Yu Jung-Hyeok didn't feel that was such a bad thing.

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As the serialisation grew longer and longer in length, the number of episodes that couldn't be filled up only through Kim Dok-Ja's Fable fragments or interviewing the companions, happened more frequently.

Yi Gil-Yeong grumbled unhappily. "Can't we, like, just gloss over it like the last time?"

"Since when did I ever gloss over anything? Yi Seol-Hwa, that thing I asked you about, get it ready!"

The moment Han Su-Yeong finished saying that, Yi Seol-Hwa wheeled in a strange device with multiple suction cups connected to it into the hospital room.

Yu Sang-Ah spoke up. "…… Isn't that the Fable fragment extractor?"

Yi Seol-Hwa nodded her head. "Yes. And from now on, we'll start extracting Fable fragments from everyone."

"Our Fables?"

"It's possible that you aren't remembering everything, and some could be hidden below your subconsciousness, as well. I'm sure you're all aware of it by now, but the majority of a Fable is usually accumulated within one's subconsciousness."

"Ah, but, it's kinda embarrassing… What if weird Fables suddenly pop out?"

As if she was obviously hoping for that, Han Su-Yeong cut in with an evil-sounding voice. "Hey, Yi Gil-Yeong, Yi Ji-Hye. You two go first."

That caused the duo being called out to back away while hesitating somewhat.

"Argh, why should I? We already told you everything we know, you know? Right, noona?"

"Of course, of course!"

Completely disregarding whether they did that or not, Han Su-Yeong grabbed and shoved them down on some chairs, before placing the suction cups on the duo's heads.

Yi Gil-Yeong freaked out. "Ahhh? That feels super weird, you know! Feels like you're putting a plunger on my head!"

Tsu-chuchuchu!

"Euh-hihiheek?!"

['Yi Gil-Yeong's' complete Fable has been extracted!]

[Fable, 'Demon King Fanatic', has started singing.]

「"Oh, oh~ Dok-Ja hyung said this~ back then……"」

"I knew it. Even the name of the Fable has 'Fanatic' in it."

Yi Gil-Yeong didn't say anything as he slumped on the seat. Han Su-Yeong narrowed

her eyes and glared at the boy, before shifting her glare over to Yi Ji-Hye next. With excellent timing, that girl's Fable had just been extracted, as well.

['Yi Ji-Hye's' Fable fragment has been extracted!]

[Fable fragment, 'Natural-born Bender of Facts', has begun its storytelling!]

"Oh, my? Hey, why don't you write the novel instead of me?"

Yi Ji-Hye avoided meeting Han Su-Yeong's glare and whistled nervously.

"You two, touch my manuscript again, and Imma kill you dead. You hear me?"

"……We won't."

"Fine. As for the others……"

Han Su-Yeong shook her head grandly and while holding a suction cup, she turned around – only for Jeong Hui-Won carrying a mischievous expression to plonk a suction cup on the former's head first.

"Ah?! What the hell! Take it off! Right now!"

['Han Su-Yeong's' Fable fragment has been extracted!]

[Fable fragment, 'Memories of a Lemon Candy', has begun its storytelling.]

「"By the way, I've been sucking on that, you know?"

"Okay. So?"

"……You can be so boring sometimes. You know that?"」

Jeong Hui-Won spoke up in a teasing tone of voice. "Oh-hoh, would you look at that?

Our dear author-nim, why did she omit such a delicious scene from the main story, I wonder?"

"……"

"Sang-Ah-ssi, let's try it out ourselves. We need to extract ours quickly so that our dear

author-nim can finish her manuscript."

While Han Su-Yeong was angrily gnashing her teeth, the rest of the companions put the suction cups on and started with their Fable fragment extraction.

['Yu Sang-Ah's' Fable fragment has been extracted!]

[Fable fragment, 'Hard work, sincerity, patience', has been extracted.]

“……What the?? Was that your family motto?"

"Everyone should learn from Yu Sang-Ah-ssi's example."

[Additional Fable fragment has been extracted from 'Yu Sang-Ah'.]

[Fable fragment, 'Memories of their first sharp, cold hand-holding', has been extracted!]

Eyes of Jeong Hui-Won confirming that Fable gleamed a little. It was a Fable she also knew, that's why. However, there were some people here who didn't know what it was about.

Han Su-Yeong asked. "What's this? You held Kim Dok-Ja's hand before?"

"Mm~. I've completely forgotten about it. There was something like that, wasn't there."

"Why did you hold his hand?"

"Are you curious?"

"I need to write the novel, so hurry up and spit it out!"

Next to the duo, Jeong Hui-Won wearing the suction cup on her head smiled at them.

"Hey, Han Su-Yeong. It's not that strange for close comrades to hold each other's hands, right? Why do you react so……”

['Jeong Hui-Won's' Fable fragment has been extracted!]

[Fable fragment, 'I've seen the Demon King of Salvation's Black Flame Dragon', has been extracted.]

Han Su-Yeong narrowed her eyes. "Oh, so really close comrades can show each other stuff like that too?"

"Hahaha… Well, I think this device has developed some kind of an error."

['Yi Hyeon-Seong's' Fable fragment has been extracted!]

[Fable fragment, 'I've seen the Demon King of Salvation's Black Flame Dragon', has been extracted!]

Jeong Hui-Won asked, utterly taken back. "Hyeon-Seong-ssi? Why do you also have that Fable?"

"Hui-Won-ssi, have you forgotten? We saw it together, didn't we?"

"What is it, what is it? What did you two see together??"

When Jang Ha-Yeong began her nagging, Jeong Hui-Won faltered a bit and started mumbling away about some random stuff in a clearly troubled tone of voice.

While the intense scrutiny was focused elsewhere, Han Su-Yeong sneakily left her spot and approached the Fable extractor. For some reason, she seemed deeply anxious. She alternated her gaze between the companions and the extractor with a complicated expression, before cautiously extending her finger towards the device's power button.

Jeong Hui-Won belatedly discovered that sight and cried out. "Han Su-Yeong, what are you doing?! You better listen well now so you don't get things mixed up la……"

[Analysis on the additional Fable fragment of 'Han Su-Yeong' has been completed.]

[Fable fragment, 'I burst Demon King's Black Flame Dragon by mista……]

Almost at the same time, Han Su-Yeong switched the device off.

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「"Okay, so. The attack from Jeon Woo-Chi flew into…… my 'that place', is that it?"」

While belatedly typing up the additional contents for the first part, Han Su-Yeong softly grumbled to herself. "Dammit, what a weird event that was."

Her strange-sounding Fable almost got discovered by the companions.

In any case, she got to write the manuscript largely trouble-free all thanks to extracting Fable fragments from the companions.

Here was a novel she wrote while using the definite information as her foundation while omitting those parts she didn't know of. At this point, she wasn't even sure whether to call this a novel or an essay.

"Fuu……”

As the work inched closer to the latter half, the shades of pain began creeping up on the companions' expressions. The memories of their happier times would eventually end up as the conclusion they had to face.

An ending where all of their effort had turned into nothing more than bubbles, and Kim Dok-Ja failing to return to their side.

Yi Gil-Yeong asked. "…… What meaning is there in writing a tragedy like this?"

"There is some."

They might have failed in changing anything, but that didn't mean they had given up.

That fact alone was enough to console someone. Even if that someone happened to be themselves.

And so, around the time when another eight months had gone by, Han Su-Yeong managed to write her way past the fourth and fifth part to reach the epilogue. And as the feelings of liberation and heightened excitement enveloped her, she began to work on the final part of the manuscript.

[The applicable world-line's system has reached the limits of its senescence.]

It was also then that something no one could have foreseen happened.

[Every system in the applicable world-line is entering the extinction phase.]

“……What?!"

[Stigma, 'Cloud System', has ceased to function.]

Fin.

…Can't upload the file to the cloud?

Han Su-Yeong hurriedly checked her Stigma several times at that sudden message.

However, it showed no signs of activating. It was as if the system's blessings had disappeared. And for sure, her body started to feel different from a little while ago.

Her body that felt like it could fly to anywhere was now getting gradually heavier and heavier.

…Could it be? No, hang on a second.

She figured that a day like this would come eventually, but it happened far quicker than she bargained for.

[The 'Bureau's Fable' in your possession has stopped its storytelling.]

Han Su-Yeong hadn't even written the novel's final episode yet, either.

Besides, if the Cloud System was no more, even if she did finish writing the manuscript, transmitting it would still be impossible.

"Goddammit……”

Right then, someone hurriedly shoved open the hospital room's door and rushed inside.

"Han Su-Yeong!"

It seemed that her companions had also realised the severity of the situation.

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"There's no way whatsoever? Seriously?"

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“……For the time being, yes."

Devices that operated through magical energy were grinding to a halt one by one.

Thanks to that, Yi Seol-Hwa's hospital was urgently swapping out the power source for the various medical equipment at the moment.

"What about Kim Dok-Ja's condition?"

"Thankfully, there don't seem to be any complications so far."

Although the power of the system had vanished, the sleeping Kim Dok-Ja was still the same. A boy quietly slumbering away, neither alive nor dead. And this very boy's other reincarnated souls living in various parts of the world-lines should be reading the manuscript she had written.

"I couldn't update the last bit of the manuscript. At this rate……" Han Su-Yeong muttered out.

"The 'Most Ancient Dreams' might not get to read the last part of the story, then."

Yu Sang-Ah's observation caused Yi Ji-Hye and Jang Ha-Yeong to cry out one after the other.

"What will happen now? Wasn't the last part of the manuscript the most important bit?"

"What about my side story?!"

"That's not really important, is it?"

They didn't know how many world-lines Yu Jung-Hyeok had paid pilgrimage to so far, but still, quite a high number of worlds should've seen the publication of the novel to the latest chapter by now.

"Argh, the one thing I hate so much in this world is a novel that gets dropped in the middle……"

The final part of the novel, its epilogue, was all about the 'thing that hasn't happened yet' to the 'Most Ancient Dream'.

Quite obviously, there was simply no way that all of them could perfectly imagine a story that hadn't happened yet.

"What should we do? You said that the last episode is the most crucial one."

"We still have one more method." Han Su-Yeong chewing on her fingers looked up to the heavens and spoke. "There is one more person who can fix the manuscript beside me. And we don't have a choice but to believe in him."

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"……The manuscript stopped updating."

The manuscript was updated roughly once a day without fail. But for the last month or so, the updates had completely stopped coming. At first, he thought this was an error arising from him travelling between the world-lines far too frequently, but when he took a closer look, even the log-in history itself was gone.

[Captain, I think something has gone wrong somewhere.]

He had two theories. One, Han Su-Yeong found herself in a situation where she couldn't write the manuscript anymore, or two, Earth's system had finally ground to a halt.

Whatever the case might be, this was not a good situation.

[Files are being automatically transmitted to the connected world-lines.]

The manuscript's latest chapter had been transmitted to other world-lines already. In the world where the serialisation started first, the notice for postponement had been issued already – what happened was that the author panicked when he suddenly couldn't think of the story and hastily announced the postponement.

The situation was not good. At this rate, authors losing their composure might start cooking up their own take on the part Han Su-Yeong had failed to write and upload.

[…Captain, there isn't much time.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok looked down at both of his hands. He then slowly

clenched his fists before unfurling them.

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It wasn't as if there were no other options available. If Han Su-Yeong was not in a situation to finish the manuscript, then… The person who could, had to complete it.

[Attribute's effect has been activated!]

[You can now edit the manuscript in the Cloud System.]

[A lot of Probability is required for the editing of the manuscript.]

Yu Jung-Hyeok slowly closed his eyes, before opening them again.

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Two months passed by after the system had entered the dissolution sequence.

The system that started crumbling away didn't show any signs of mending itself. The number of people who could hear the messages gradually decreased. Also, skills and Stigmata started disappearing one by one. Even the voices of the Fables couldn't be heard anymore.

- An airliner operating on magic energy engines has crashed in the East Sea…

Artefacts from the bygone world that hadn't been replaced yet began causing problems as well.

"Argh, that's why I told them to replace all of that stuff!"

Jeong Hui-Won watching the news on the screen finally blew her top.

Han Su-Yeong asked her. "Who went over there?"

"Ji-Hye and the kids. Although pretty weak, they can still activate their Stigmata, so……"

The two of them watched the live broadcast of the rescue attempt. The screen now displayed the figures of Yi Ji-Hye, Yi Gil-Yeong, and Shin Yu-Seung – as well as their turtle ship and Chimera Dragon, both of which were a lot smaller than before.

"The waves are too strong."

Survivors were continuously extracted and rescued one at a time, but the incoming waves were getting rougher by the second as well. The Chimera Dragon and the turtle ship tottered precariously. The rescue operation continued on despite the rough, inclement weather, but the situation didn't seem optimistic at the moment.

Han Su-Yeong, unable to look on anymore, stood up from her seat. "Call Yu Sang-Ah right now and get a helicopter ready. It's gonna be impossible for those three alone."

"I already did, but due to the storm……"

Han Su-Yeong quietly spat out, "Dammit," and began packing her stuff.

- Breaking news, just in. An unidentified flying object has broken into the East Sea's atmosphere and entered the……

Inside the screen, they could now see an object flying in through the pitch-black storm clouds. Accompanied by a massive explosion noise, a distant spot in the ocean was enveloped in bright light. Drones broke past the winds and waves to fly there, and continued to transmit real-time footage from the nearby ocean.

Soon, the exterior of the flying object was revealed among the pulsating grey foams. It was a capsule-shaped ark, and someone was standing up from within it.

"……Yu Jung-Hyeok??"

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After confirming the news, Han Su-Yeong and the rest of the companions all rushed to the East Sea.

- All of the injured survivors have been safely rescued with help from the alien being…

- The alien in question has been identified as the terror suspect who had left Earth two years ago…

Breaking news continued to inundate the airwaves.

How long did they wait by the docks? Finally, the rescue ships approaching the port could be seen in the distance – Yi Ji-Hye's turtle ship occupying the central position in the formation. She and the kids were waving their hands.

And right behind them was a man looking at the dock and at his companions.

"You……!"

It was an unfamiliar sight. Although his face hadn't changed a lot, his dishevelled hair sported several grey spots now.

"Been a while," said Yu Jung-Hyeok.

Han Su-Yeong paused, not knowing what to say – before shooting back reflexively at him. "What about the mission? Why have you come back so soon?"

She knew full well she shouldn't have said that. The length of time Yu Jung-Hyeok must've endured should not be simplified with such words.

Yu Jung-Hyeok replied. "I had no choice but to return."

"Oppa!"

Yu Mi-Ah ran in from behind the group and jumped into his embrace. He gently held her as she sobbed nonstop.

Han Su-Yeong quietly observed the scene before asking him. "Who's the girl you brought with you?"

That prompted the girl behind Yu Jung-Hyeok to peek her head out and say something.

"Seriously, you too……? No one recognises me." The girl grandly sighed out and muttered as if she was tired of doing this. "Bah-aht."

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Yu Sang-Ah personally went to fetch the companions with her limousine. During the transit, as Yi Seol-Hwa performed the medical check-up on him, Yu Jung-Hyeok began recounting all the events that had happened to him.

From the moment of leaving Earth, lost and drifting between the world-lines, receiving help from the Outer Gods, meeting Biyu in the Dark Stratum, and to eventually completing his trip around the world-lines.

“……You had no choice but to return because you ran out of Fable energy?"

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"That's right."

It seemed that the dissolution of the system had affected Yu Jung-Hyeok in outer space, as well. In other words, this was the worst possible situation that could happen.

"Just how long were you out there in space?"

"Are you curious?"

A faint smile-like expression floated up on Yu Jung-Hyeok's lips before vanishing completely. As that was a rather un-Yu Jung-Hyeok-like behaviour, Han Su-Yeong ended up frowning deeply.

“……You actually smiled?"

"Rest easy. I've already visited all the world-lines that I could have gone to. With Biyu's help, a link that updates in real-time has been established, so the authors of those world-lines should be uploading the novel in the correct sequence."

The companions eavesdropping all breathed a sigh of relief at Yu Jung-Hyeok's words.

However, one important point still remained.

"Did you transmit everything? What about the last part of the manuscript? What did you do with the final episode?" Han Su-Yeong asked.

"Are you talking about the part you didn't send to me?"

"That's right! The last part of the manuscript that you could have fixed!" Han Su-Yeong finally exploded in impatient anger. "You also have a writer's attribute, right? If you've been reading my novel from the start, you should at least be able to guess how the conclusion is supposed to unfold, right? Ng? So, did you write it? You did write it instead of me, right??"

Yu Jung-Hyeok wordlessly stared at Han Su-Yeong. How long passed by like this? He quietly shifted his gaze outside the window.

Han Su-Yeong's voice began trembling. "You… You couldn't have……”

"Do you believe that I should've written it?"

"What dogsh*t are you talking about, you bastard?! Obviously you……!"

"Do you believe that it's reasonable to write our wish that didn't come true as the novel's conclusion?" He looked at Han Su-Yeong's expression hardening up in an instant and continued on. "Han Su-Yeong. No matter how hard we try, this story is different from the lives we had lived."

"……You, you think I don't know that……"

Indeed, she also knew. Rather, she knew it better than anyone out there.

She kept feeling this sense of separation with every sentence being written. No matter how precise the words she wrote were, no matter how painstakingly considered each expression she came up with was – it was still impossible to fully capture the history they remembered and to fully reproduce Kim Dok-Ja who used to live in this world within the story's pages.

"It's not as if I didn't give it a shot. I utilised the Fable that I still remembered and tried to write the final episode, just like how you did. However……"

In order to recreate Kim Dok-Ja, the Fables of the companions had gathered. One piece, two pieces… The sentences they remembered were piled up to become the imaginary

'Kim Dok-Ja'.

「…… You wish to hear what my boy was like when he was young?」

「The 'Dok-Ja' ahjussi that I remember was…… 」

「I'm telling you, hyung really did that! For real!」

One percent of Kim Dok-Ja, then two percent…

Many people still remembered him, and Kim Dok-Ja as gathered in that manner could potentially have ended up as the 99 percent.

"Even if Kim Dok-Ja came back to us alive through the story we have crafted, do you truly believe that he will be the real Kim Dok-Ja?"

That remaining one percent of Kim Dok-Ja they couldn't remember.

That Kim Dok-Ja none of them could remember, where would he be left behind in this universe, then?

"Even before his soul scattered, Kim Dok-Ja was the 'Most Ancient Dream'. Haven't you ever thought about how strange it was? Why didn't that fool ever dream of his own happiness?"

Han Su-Yeong shot back in near hysteria. "…… Even if he is the 'Most Ancient Dream', you can't just imagine a world the way you want. Most of the dreaming itself is done subconsciously!!"

"In that case, Kim Dok-Ja's subconsciousness must've thought that this conclusion is the right one."

An existence who had never imagined his own happiness. The 'Kim Dok-Ja' they knew was such a person.

"I also know that! I knew that Kim Dok-Ja was such a person… Why do you think I started writing this story in the first place? Why, why I have……"

Drops of something wet were falling onto the backs of her feet. She wanted to say something, anything. To shout out, to grab hold onto Yu Jung-Hyeok's neck and choke him, shake him around. However, she couldn't.

A voice mixed with indescribable fatigue entered her ears.

"In order to save someone……"

Han Su-Yeong raised her head at Yu Jung-Hyeok's voice fleeting past.

"Because of your story, I was able to survive until now."

She glared at him with her reddened, tearful eyes. "That's not something I wanted to hear from a bastard like you."

The distant view of the Industrial Complex could be seen.

That was their home. A place where every member of used to live. A place created by someone's seemingly impossible dream.

Everyone now looked at it.

Yu Sang-Ah holding the steering wheel spoke. "…… So, that's what happened. Thank you for telling us the story, Jung-Hyeok-ssi."

No one was crying. No one criticised Yu Jung-Hyeok for his choice. This wasn't because their sorrow had been watered down. No, perhaps they had grown that much stronger.

It wasn't just Yu Jung-Hyeok alone.

The companions regained enough strength to carry on with their remaining time by writing the story, then reading what had been written all the while praying for a certain someone to read this story with them. The courage not to crumble even when the miracle they dreamed about evaporated right before their eyes.

Now, they could carry on knowing that some people were reading their story in the distant, far-flung other side of the universe.

Yi Ji-Hye asked. "…… By the way, that novel? Was it popular?"

"It wasn't bad."

"You think Dok-Ja ahjussis were enjoying it?"

"Hey, you sooty bastard! Have you seen the reincarnated Dok-Ja-hyung? How was he?"

As if they wanted to ask about everything they were dying to know until now, questions from the companions bombarded Yu Jung-Hyeok next.

He calmly replied. "I haven't seen any reincarnated Kim Dok-Ja.

However……” He looked at Kim Dok-Ja's statue brushing past the vehicle's window and continued on.

"…… That fool definitely has read the story. I have a hunch."

"Dok-Ja ahjussi must be really irritated about now. Not being able to see the conclusion again……”

How would the Kim Dok-Jas of other world-lines remember this story's conclusion?

Han Su-Yeong had no way of knowing. Coming up with a good conclusion was as difficult as making your ex accept the reason why you were breaking up with them.

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“……Wait, Dok-Ja-ssis from other world-lines aren't going to invade this place, are they?"

That question prompted someone to whisper softly.

"That might be nice."

At the end of those words, deep silence descended on the companions. With great timing, Yu Sang-Ah turned on the music right then. Notes from the instruments cascaded like falling raindrops. No one tried to look at each other's faces. That was the only courtesy they could exercise, at least for this moment.

Within this weighty tenderness of the moment, Han Su-Yeong's thoughts drifted towards her novel still stored inside her notebook PC.

The story without the last chapter.

And now, no one would get to read about this novel's conclusion.

But perhaps, this world sometimes needed a story like that, she mused.

"How about we…… start living in one house again?"

Everyone raised their heads at someone's suggestion.

A realisation was gradually dawning on Han Su-Yeong.

「This was the story that Kim Dok-Ja had given to them.」

The companions had regained their daily lives, and Yu Jung-Hyeok came home, too.

This was the end of 's adventures. The conclusion that the person they all loved wished to see had finally been completed.

Han Su-Yeong abruptly shifted her gaze over to Yu Jung-Hyeok. “… Okay, so. Did you get to find out what your ■■ was?"

"Not yet. However, at this point, I think it no longer matters whether I get to learn it or……”

It was right at that moment a strange sensation suddenly assaulted him.

The sounds of 'Tsu-chuchuchut' could be heard coming from somewhere.

「…… 」

A noise wavered within their ears like a faint, distant song. The moment Yu Sang-Ah turned the music off, Biyu's appearance as she sat in the front passenger seat suddenly changed.

[…Bah-aht??]

Biyu had morphed back into the figure of a large furball. But that couldn't be possible.

Before climbing into the car, she clearly said that the dissolution of

the system had paralysed her ability to shapeshift.

"Uh??"

The voices coming from the empty air grew clearer and clearer. This was definitely sounds of Fables busy telling their stories.

“……What's going on? The system should still be broken, though?"

Han Su-Yeong stared at Yu Jung-Hyeok, but he was looking back at her with the exact same eyes as hers.

[Fable, 'King of a Kingless World', has begun its storytelling once more.]

Groups of blinding letters were streaming past in the skies outside the vehicle's windows. They were from a Fable the companions knew intimately.

"Yu Sang-Ah!!"

Yu Sang-Ah hurriedly stepped on the accelerator. Meanwhile, Han Su-Yeong answered her phone loudly ringing inside her pocket. The call was from Aileen.

- Su-Yeong-ssi!! Right now, it……!

Her voice couldn't be heard properly because of all the noises coming from the surroundings.

[Fable, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling once more.]

Fables that had vanished without a trace along with the system's dissolution were now streaming towards somewhere while following after one another. Every single one of them were stories that had come to an end a long time ago.

「Is the story really over when the author stops writing it?」

Han Su-Yeong looked up at the letters floating around in the skies.

The letters that didn't hold any meaning when existing independently of each other were beginning to find their mates and groups one by one.

"……Disconnected film theory?!"

The companions soon drove into the Complex and hurriedly jumped out of the limousine. Then, they began running. The Fables they had acquired until now, the Fables they had been telling until now, were brushing past their sides.

No one knew what the conclusion to this story was.

No matter how hard they tried, 'Kim Dok-Ja' would never come back. Even if they did recreate the '99% Kim Dok-Ja', that missing one percent would always be there.

But then, what if there was one existence in this entire world that could fill the last void of one percent? One existence, who used to possess the letters subconsciously scattered to the distant universe?

"Su-Yeong-ssi! Over there!"

They could see Yi Seol-Hwa's hospital in the distance. Fables leisurely streaming there guided them. Fables were gathering towards the hospital ward they were all intimately familiar with.

[Great Fable, 'Demon World's Spring', has begun its storytelling once more.]

Han Su-Yeong thought to herself.

If an author didn't write it, then a story's conclusion couldn't be created.

[Great Fable, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling once more.]

Even if that was true, however, did that mean those reading the story couldn't imagine the conclusion on their own way? Han Su-Yeong powerfully bit her lip. This story was created by her own hands. But another story she didn't know of was continuing on from the end of her story.

「What will happen if the moment of someone's imagination overtaking the author's sentences, comes?」

As skills and Stigma hadn't returned in full yet, Han Su-Yeong ran out of breath rather quickly. Yu Jung-Hyeok supported her and kept running. Shin Yu-Seung rushing up the stairs tripped and fell. Other companions reached out and helped her up.

[Great Fable, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling once more.]

[Great Fable, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling once more.]

The Great Fables they had acquired together were returning to them one by one. Even the unnamed last Fable of began singing about the emotion that no one dared to name.

This desire, a wish, of those who went their separate ways a long time ago to become one once more.

To grieve for someone else, to celebrate, to get angry, and to despair. And eventually, wishing to become that someone else.

Someone was sympathising with their story. As her breathing grew heavier and heavier, Han Su-Yeong kept thinking to herself over and over again.

「If this story can really save you… 」

If you regained just a little of your memories and remember us just one more time…

"Over there!"

…Then I'll keep writing the epilogue for you until the end of the time, for eternity.

She reached before the hospital room's door, completely out of breath. Han Su-Yeong

was now standing before the very room that she came to visit every single day for the past four years.

The rest of the companions running up the staircase one step behind were now looking at her. She looked back, and began recalling the very last paragraph to the conclusion she didn't get to write.

「There are three ways to survive in a ruined world.」

She then heard Jeong Hui-Won shouting out.

"Han Su-Yeong!"

The other companions who heard the news belatedly – comrades who didn't accompany them to the East Sea, could be seen running over here through the building's window.

「I've forgotten a few by now. However, one thing's for certain.」

Han Su-Yeong's trembling hand grasped the door's handle.

She was scared. What if there was nothing beyond this door?

What if all this was nothing more than a sweet lie?

She looked to her side, and saw Yu Jung-Hyeok nodding his head.

「And that is, the you reading these words will get to survive.」

No matter what was waiting for them beyond this door, they were now ready to witness it. The door creaked noisily as it opened. Faint rays of sunlight entered through the wide-open window. The pages of

the manuscript she spent the whole night revising scattered around in the wind. Letters scattered in a blinding fashion.

The story she didn't get to complete, it was right there.

The sentences she really wanted to write sometime, even if it was not now. While thinking about those sentences, Han Su-Yeong grinned like an idiot.

「This story is for just that one reader.」

Fin.



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